



Report of the re-accreditation of the *University College of Applied Sciences Libertas*

Zagreb

13 December 2011

Composition of the expert panel

Pursuant to Article 22 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education and Article 30 Paragraph 1 Item 4 of the Statute of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, the Accreditation Council of the Agency for Science and Higher Education at its 20th session on 8 November 2011 passed the decision to appoint a panel of experts for the re-accreditation of the University College of Applied Sciences Libertas, as follows:

- Prof. Andreas Polk, Berlin School of Economics and Law, Germany (Chair)
- Prof. Jürgen Bruns, University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule Niederrhein, Germany
- Dr. sc. Diana Plantic Tadic, University of Applied Sciences, Vern
- Dr. sc. Dario Silic, Bina Istra and Zagreb School of Economics and Management
- Deni Paskojevic, student at the American College of Management and Technology, Dubrovnik

Content

Introduction.....	4
Short description of the evaluated institution.....	4
Description of the expert panel's work.....	6
Detailed analysis based on standards and criteria for re-accreditation.....	7
Institutional Management and Quality Assurance.....	7
Study Programs.....	10
Students.....	15
Teaching staff.....	19
Scientific and Professional Activity.....	21
International Cooperation and Mobility.....	23
Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances.....	27
Final report and recommendations by the expert panel.....	31
Advantages.....	31
Disadvantages.....	31
Recommendations for improvement of quality	32

INTRODUCTION

Short description of the evaluated institution

University College of Applied Sciences Libertas ("Libertas") is a private institution located in Zagreb, which was founded and accredited in 2004. The institution uses premises on the address Trg J.F. Kennedy 6b in Zagreb, partly in the ownership of the Business College and partly in the ownership of the founders, *Libertas zastupanje d.o.o.* Zagreb, Trg J.F. Kennedyja 6b.

Libertas offers an undergraduate study program "Business Economics" and two graduate study programs named "Domestic & International Trade Management" and "Banking, Insurance & Finance Management". The undergraduate study program lectures started in the academic year 2004/05, the specialist graduate studies in 2005/06. All programs are offered on a 3+2 basis, which is fully in accordance with the Bologna process. The degrees awarded are "Professional Bachelor" for the undergraduate study, "Professional Graduate Specialist in Domestic & International Trade Management" and "Professional Graduate Specialist in Banking, Insurance & Finance Management" for the graduate studies.

Libertas recently expanded its activities. With the academic year 2009/10, it started to offer the "Business Economics" program at the Samobor area, with lectures partly held in Samobor and partly in Zagreb. With the academic year 2010/11, the lectures were also expanded to Kutina.

Libertas also plans to develop new study programs in the near future. With the academic year 2012/13, it plans to introduce two new undergraduate study programs entitled "Management in Sport" and "Corporate Security Management", as well as one graduate program "Business Intelligence". Moreover, Libertas takes into consideration and plans to start a remote study program in the academic year 2013/14.

In September 2011, Libertas enlisted 1.300 students. The institution has grown since its formation 5 % annually on average (in terms of intakes), which is also the envisaged growth rate for the near future. So far, 716 students have graduated from the undergraduate program "Business Economics" and 103 students graduated from one of the two graduate study program. The capacity of intakes is currently 240 students in the

undergraduate and 80 students in the graduate study program. The two new undergraduate study programs and the new graduate study program to be introduced in the academic year 2012/13 will add a total of 140 students in intake capacity.

The lectures are performed by 45-50 teachers and external associates. The ratio of employed and associated teachers to full-time and part-time students is 1 to 29. Of the teachers, 18 are permanently employed as teachers and six as assistant teachers (1:50 ratio). The rest of the teaching load is covered by 27 external associates. The ratio of teaching by in-house teachers is higher in the undergraduate studies and lower in the two graduate study programs, with a ratio of college teachers to outsourced associates in the "Business Economics" undergraduate program of approx. 2 to 1 (in terms of lectures held), and a coverage in the two graduate programs of approx. 2 to 3. Libertas also employs a staff of 10 for business administration purposes, which leads to a balance between teaching and non-teaching staff of 2,4 to 1.

So far, Libertas has a strong focus on teaching in the national context. It cooperates with few Croatian firms and CROMA. The institution does not report any research projects so far, but it lists a couple of publications. Up to now, the institution did invite some guest lecturers from abroad, but there is no considerable amount of staff or student exchange to other foreign or domestic academic institutions, neither incoming nor outgoing. So far, the school has not offered full courses in English.

Libertas governing body is the Management Body, which consists of the Dean, the Professional Council, the Management Council and the Director. The Dean is a member of the Professional Council, which is the professional, academic lectures body. Students represent at least 15 % of the Professional Council members (three at the time of writing). The director performs the business management function at Libertas and the Management Council has the authority prescribed by the law (the Statute). The dean is supported by a vice-dean. There are study program heads which execute the dean's and vice-dean's decisions on teaching and lectures. Libertas has four chairs, whose members are teachers and associates performing teaching activities. The chairs are in charge of the organization, performance and development of the teaching system.

Libertas' overall mission is to create experts for the business challenges in the future, and to promote the culture of knowledge and business ethics with keeping high value criteria.

Description of the expert panel's work

The expert panel has, in line with the document Procedure for Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, analysed the self-evaluation report drafted by the University College of Applied Sciences Libertas, and visited the institution on December 13th 2011.

During the site-visit the members of the panel had separate meetings with the management, teachers, assistants, representatives of various committees and other staff and students. The panel did a tour of facilities (e.g. lecture rooms, libraries) in line with the previously defined Visit Protocol. These meetings gave the panel members a direct insight into activities and work conditions at Libertas.

During the training before the site visit, the panel appointed the President, who spoke on behalf of the panel and communicated common opinions, comments and recommendations for improvement.

The quality grade, in line with the Criteria for Quality Assessment of Polytechnics and Colleges, was brought by the Panel unanimously, as well as all other grades and decisions. There was no disagreement on any of the final grades. Thus, the Report contains the opinions of the panel as a whole, and each member has confirmed his or her agreement by signing all the criteria.

In addition to the panel, the site visit team also included the coordinator and the translator, both employees of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

DETAILED ANALYSIS BASED ON STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR THE RE-ACCREDITATION

The following chapter contains comments and recommendations for each criterion. The grades reflect the results and opinions of the panel members gained on the basis of the complete documentation available and all the information collected during the site visit. The list of the criteria can be found as an appendix to this document (the filled forms for quality assessment) while the Report lists criteria by number only and contains opinions and recommendations. These have not included the whole variety of information received, or the total of the panel's opinions, and in some places only one or few segments of the panel's opinions have been reported. In addition to what has been listed in the following chapters, we would thus like to warmly recommend the higher education institution to continue improving all aspects of its work and the quality criteria not specifically mentioned in this report, which are necessary to even further improve the quality of work at the institution.

1. Institutional Management and Quality Assurance

1.1 The management of the institution is aware of strategic planning, but did not develop a strategic plan so far. It demonstrated that it has some ideas and objectives in which direction the institution is supposed to develop. Most of these ideas refer to introduction of new study programs and how to increase intakes, as is documented in the self-evaluation report. The management also held a couple of strategic workshops to develop ideas. The establishment of a strategic plan is only in the early beginning. Due to the lack of a reliable document it is not possible to check or retrace the strategic goals. The institution has not yet clearly and formally developed milestones, nor does a timeframe for the development of Libertas exist.

Recommendation:

- **We recommend formally developing a strategic plan which covers the next five to ten years. The strategic plan should state the goals according to the mission and vision of the institution and give reliable information about the means how to achieve these goals.**

- **We also recommend continuing with the strategic workshops, which should include all relevant stakeholders, especially businesses from the Zagreb region and Croatia.**

1.2 The institution developed a set of rules and set up an organizational structure. Huge discretion in decision making is left to the management, with the dean appearing to be the most important person who centralizes many powers. Certain processes are not formalized yet, for instance regarding questions of establishing quality standards and the way they will be achieved in the future (quality and control procedures). Examples are the feedback of the survey system, which appears to be conducted on an ad hoc level and based on individual efforts, or the lack of a development plan for human resources (academic, office and technical staff). We would like to note that it came to our attention during the site visit that personal relationships seem to play a certain role in the organizational structure. The general manager was reported to us as being the son of the Chairman of the Board. For the team it is not possible to judge to which extent this poses questions concerning the professionalism and the need of independency of the various management members, which should ensure the necessary balance of powers within the institution's operation.

Recommendation:

- **We recommend continuing on the path of development and formalizing structures. As an example, establish a formalized feedback system which ensures that quality will be improved.**
- **We recommend establishing a staff development plan.**
- **We also recommend assuring that management works in a professional way and on an independent basis, which includes a well-established balance of powers. The organizational structure should be less dean centred.**

1.3 For the Zagreb campus the study programs are well aligned with the Bologna reform and the Croatian Quality Framework. For programs in Kutina and Samobor we have no information if they are in line with Bologna and the Croatian Quality Framework since we have not controlled nor visited those locations nor have they been accredited

yet. Study programs are not in line with the mission of Libertas ("create ... experts for the business challenge in the future") with regard to the aspect of internationalization, as this is an important part with respect to future needs.

1.4 A quality assurance procedure exists, some documents were presented. The only way of measuring quality standards are students' questionnaires. The students are not well informed about the aspects they raise and to which extent the management intends to realize them. Overall, inclusion of independent students tends to be low in the quality processes. Quality assurance does not include other stakeholders such as the school's teachers or stakeholders from businesses. In terms of quality insurance and continuous quality improvement, we also noted insufficient evidence of partnership with business subjects. Moreover, the whole process appears to be much depending on the vice-dean, who is president of the Quality Board. Feedback is conducted face-to-face by him.

Recommendation:

- **Make the whole quality procedure more independent and professionalize it. For instance, make it more independent of the board members and the vice-dean, for instance by employing an independent person who is in charge of the quality system.**
- **Establish a better feedback loop to the students, develop a questionnaire for the teachers, and introduce a survey for former students (alumni) who are now employed. The survey should be conducted on a regular basis.**
- **We strongly recommend setting up more intense and diversified relationships with business stakeholders and investigating their needs regularly.**

1.5 Libertas is well developed in the aspect of quality assurance system. It has student questionnaires; a fluent communication between students and teachers exists. The institution also started to conduct peer reviews of teachers, the "Textbook Commission" checks the quality of books and mimeographs provided to the students. The formal mechanisms are still open to a certain extent, for instance it was not revealed to the panel members which circumstances have to occur that the school dismisses a

teacher who did not perform well, and what are his/her chances to improve. The feedback rule towards students and teachers is not formalized.

Recommendation:

- **Compare 1.4. We would like to strengthen the aspect of establishing a body which is independent of the management.**

1.6 Libertas has a code of ethics, the "Commission for Ethics" and the "Business College Council of Honour" to implement it. During our site visit, the panel team did not learn about any problems with respect to ethical behaviour. **Recommendation: The institution needs to appoint a students' ombudsperson and a faculty ombudsperson in the near future.**

2. Study Programs

2.1 The enrolment quotas are in line with the resources at the institution and set to meet the economic needs of Libertas, that is, by favouring a commercial approach. The objective is to take in as many students as possible, the selection is done at a very low level. The management was not able to prove that enrolment is aligned with the society's needs. There is a low level of unemployment by alumni, but the panel is not convinced that this is up to the enrolment process. Especially since students indicated that many come from family businesses and go back to the family business upon graduation. The panel team does not know if enrolment quotas for the dislocated studies at Kutina and Samobor exist.

Recommendation:

- **Assure that studying at Libertas increases alumni's chances on the job market.**
- **Develop enrolment quotas which are in line with the society's needs and the Croatian labour market, and justify these quotas. For instance, get better feedback from the alumni and establish a better type of cooperation with the local, national and international businesses on a sustainable basis to the benefit of the students.**

- **Develop formal rules and explain the way in which the institution defines enrolment quotas and criteria and the optimal quotas in its current, as well as future work. Rely more heavily on the analyses of the domestic labour market and the employment needs.**

2.2 These rules exist for new students and are published on the website. It is unclear which threshold new students have to overcome. For students from other institutions, a formalized regulation does not exist and any student who passed the admission criteria at other institutions is allowed to study at Libertas. In this case, decisions are very subjective and taken on a case by case basis, especially with respect to the recognition of prior learning qualifications.

Recommendation:

Formalize rules for new students and make them more transparent, especially with respect to the needed thresholds. Develop written rules for the recognition of academic learning results of other institutions (i.e. which role the syllabus play, the course lists etc.) Accept the State Matura as one of the conditions for enrolment and try to administer an exam to all students from other institutions who have not taken the Matura exam.

2.3 There are syllabi for each course which define study outcomes, the literature used, and the required skills of the students. Libertas also provides course schedules for each week of a course.

2.4 The aspect of ensuring that learning outcomes are met seems to be implemented to a certain extent, but the panel team was not fully convinced. Students were generally satisfied, but there are also teachers who were not well assessed. Libertas did not prove that it does any analysis of the needs of the Croatian labour market, nor does it do any benchmarking with other institutions in Croatia or abroad. Consequently, we cannot see how the school assures that learning outcomes are met. Moreover, the average grade might indicate that learning outcomes are met only to a certain extent (average grade 3,3 to 3,5 for the undergraduate program; slightly better for the graduate studies).

Recommendation:

- **Introduce benchmarking or other types of activities which assure that the learning outcomes are state of the art and developed according to the needs of the labour market, and that they are in fact met by the students.**
- **We recommend improving the quality of teaching in all courses, i.e. by putting more focus on case studies and applied learning.**

2.5 Libertas does not define – or at least does not show explicitly -the workload, but only the class hours, and therefore ECTS credits are not in line with the workload. According to Bologna rules the workload includes class attendance and homework (e.g. preparation of presentations, reading, assignments, group work or exam preparations) and 30 hours workload are equivalent to 1 credit point (ECTS). A six semester bachelor program is equivalent to 180 ECTS (5400 hours workload).

There are differences between the class hours (lectures, seminars and exercises) and ECTS which should either be corrected or better reflected in the calculation for the workload. If the calculation of the workload and the ECTS does not strictly follow Bologna rules it might not be possible to attract students from other higher education institutions (HEIs) and Libertas students might not be accepted at another HEI. Respecting Bologna rules might be a precondition for students' mobility.

Recommendation: Develop formal rules for awarding ECTS credits to courses and check if they reflect the workload. Regularly control and update the ECTS credits in order to ensure that they reflect the workload.

2.6 Content and quality are in line with the Bologna requirements and seem to be in line with international standards (this is unknown with respect to the dislocated studies at Kutina and Samobor). The curriculum is familiar and in line with what is taught at other schools. However, there is a lack of factual proof, because the institution does not do any benchmarking with other Croatian or international institutions, and there exists almost no mobility of students. Consequently, it is impossible to tell if the quality of teaching and learning standards are competitive with internationally recognized standards. Also, Libertas does not offer full courses in English.

Recommendation:

- **We strongly recommend applying Bologna rules for calculating the workload and the corresponding ECTS. This is one basis for national and international comparison and thus for mobility of students.**
- **Furthermore we recommend establishing courses taught in English on a regular basis as a necessary prerequisite to attract foreign students (and to send students abroad), and we recommend establishing international cooperation with other institutions to be lived in the everyday academic life.**

2.7 The aspect of adapting teaching to students' needs is met in general. The school sometimes splits courses according to different speeds in learning according to the prior knowledge (i.e. Maths). Courses entail different types of teaching depending on the topic, and there is a diverse system of exams. Students complained about different qualities in teaching depending on the personality of the teacher, and they noted a lack of case studies, field work etc.

Recommendation:

- **Use more interactive teaching methods (case studies, students' projects, field studies).**
- **Offer seminars and incentives to teachers who like to apply new teaching methods (problem-based learning, e-learning).**

2.8 Students and teachers are not able to do scientific research in the library; Libertas does not have access to electronic databases providing access to academic and public journals or statistics. Students are left alone when they have to get information beyond the very basic needs which the library meets, for instance by using public libraries.

Recommendation:

- **Set up appropriate resources, for instance by providing access to international journals, databases, statistics, additional contents of newspapers and magazines.**

2.9 A minimum of partnerships with businesses exists, but the assistance of students in this respect is poor. Internships are mandatory, but students are left alone with organising them. Business partnerships exist (with PBZ only), but are on a low level and not well developed. Students do not benefit much from them. For internships students have to stay in Zagreb, because they have lectures at the same day.

Recommendation:

- **Improve all these aspects so that students are able to benefit.**
- **Provide better support to students and introduce a career centre. Provide better support for finding internships, especially with a focus outside Zagreb area and adjust the course schedule at Zagreb accordingly. Invest further efforts in making formal agreements with businesses in order to enable students to participate in practical work and internships.**

2.10 Libertas started in the academic year 2009/2010 with the undergraduate Business Economy program at Samobor, and in 2010/2011 the same in Kutina. Libertas did not accredit these dislocated studies yet. Panel members noted that the management might have been aware of the fact that they should have had accredited them before start. Moreover, the school intends to introduce three new study programs in the future. The management did not prove that there are formal processes by which new study programs are proposed. The panel team did not get any information on how stakeholders are involved in these processes and how Libertas tends to meet their needs, or how those of the society are met. The processes appear to be very much ad hoc and dependent on individual decisions by the management.

Recommendation:

- **We recommend formalizing these processes. Libertas should include all stakeholders, especially from business. With respect to the dislocated studies at Samobor and Kutina, we recommend that Libertas contacts ASHE. Regarding introduction of new programs, define and develop formal rules on their development and introduction, as well as the needs (to acquire new facilities, train or employ teachers) and financial expenses connected to the introduction of new programs.**

3. Students

3.1 Libertas provides transparent information on its webpage. Potential students are able to get the information they need to know.

Recommendation: Invest further efforts into disseminating information on study goals, student workload and future employment opportunities. Students must be informed in advance about what is expected of them – the knowledge and work effort they will have to invest. Use the students to promote the institution, as well as various communication channels to inform the public about the school.

3.2 The webpage states how State Matura results add to the final result in the enrolment process. Admission criteria exist, but they should be harmonized for all students and more transparent. With respect to grammar school, Libertas applies the law about the acceptance of State Matura. The candidates who graduate from vocational secondary school are not enrolled based on State Matura, which is not in accordance with the ministry's recommendation. In this case the institution employs alternative measures for admission (i.e. interviews, tests). Libertas accepts the admission criteria of other schools without any further proof. For potential students from other institutions, the system of admission is not transparent.

Recommendation: Improve transparency and better define the criteria which need to be met for all types of students (i.e. thresholds). Apply the rules following the legal recommendations of the law. Look into the ways of improving the enrolment criteria, especially with regard to graduation rate and future

employment (alumni). Introduce stricter criteria, since an exam and an interview are not necessarily the best ways to enrol quality students.

3.3. A minimum of standards exists, and there is a list of competencies needed for every study program. Libertas does not check competencies for some intakes (compare 3.2). Moreover, the students' results in their studies leave room for improvement, which indicates that competences are not perfectly aligned with needs.

Recommendation: Better define the competences for each study program and every type of student. Make sure that they are not only aligned to the needs, but consistently applied from the beginning. Establish a database of alumni employment and compare the data to the students' competences upon enrolment in order to improve the enrolment procedure. Favour the institutional reputation based on the quality of alumni over a commercial approach.

3.4 A campus atmosphere is missing. There is no student restaurant, nor rooms which provide occasions to meet in an informal atmosphere. Even the library does not offer comfortable study places. Libertas does not own sport facilities, but the self-evaluation report states that they rent it. Students reported that the basketball team received some support in the past for a tournament (sneakers). Libertas does not offer general studies ("Studium Generale"). A student magazine exists.

Recommendation:

We recommend offering a larger spectrum of extra activities and starting to establish a campus atmosphere. One way could be to convert a room into a lounge or some other type of informal meeting area for the students. Also offer facilities which invite students to stay and exchange in an informal way.

3.5 The institution offers counselling and mentorship on request. Teachers have defined office hours. During the site visit, students explained that it depends much on the individual motivation of each teacher what you get from it, but they didn't complain much about this point. At the same time they didn't seem to be aware that better support could exist with respect to this aspect. To a certain extent, we also noted complaints by the students that the support for internship could be improved.

Recommendation:

- **Develop rules for counselling and mentorship which is independent of the student's own initiative, especially for students facing problems finishing their studies.**
- **Give better support for finding attractive internships, for instance by the establishment of an effectively working career centre which really offers opportunities. The centre should provide advice in the business context, on career planning and development, writing resumes and testing, organize professional workshops, present the labour market needs, assist students in finding jobs and internships, etc.**

3.6 Libertas describes the procedures on its webpage; the feedback to the teachers is not formalized. There are different types of exams, and students have the possibility to appeal. We did not hear about complaints by the students. They only mentioned that the institution cancelled the spring exam, which caused delay for some students in their studies.

3.7 An alumni club exists, but it is not effective. The management was not able to provide any statistical data, for instance about the overall number of alumni, how they do in their jobs etc. So far, Libertas did not organize events for former students. According to the Croatian Unemployment Office, the number of unemployed former students is low.

Recommendation:

We recommend further engaging and promoting the alumni club and keeping in contact with former students. We also recommend collecting data about alumni and creating an atmosphere of identification with the institution in order to improve the feedback about the quality of the education at Libertas.

3.8 The aspect of student participation is formally fulfilled, but from the panel experts' perspective, it is doubtful that the institution has independent student representatives in the relevant bodies. For instance, in the Management Board a student is formally present, but she is also employed at the institution as a teacher / assistant

and therefore not independent. The student being in his third year in the Student Council was not known to the other students we met.

Recommendation:

Try to have independent and elected student representatives for each year in all relevant bodies. Avoid conflicts of interest which arise due to different roles a person has at the institution. Introduce further formal rules on decision-making in the Student Council and introduce the right to veto the decisions of the management which bear special importance to students.

3.9 Libertas provides information on the webpage, the English version is outdated (i.e. enrolment procedure is described for the academic year 2009/10!). An internal newsletter exists.

Recommendation:

Improve quality and dissemination of useful information to all stakeholders, for instance by providing better information about employment opportunities. In addition to the Internet, use other communication channels in order to further develop a positive public image of the institution, advertise in the media and continue producing the brochure aimed at general public.

3.10 The students can express their opinion, but the institution does not inform them well about the results and measures taken.

Recommendation: Establish better feedback rules to students. Produce annual analyses of all surveys regarding individual courses, institutional services, overall student satisfaction, internships and practical work, and compare the graphical results to those from previous years in order to identify trends and opportunities for quality improvement.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Libertas provides lessons with the help of an appropriate diversification of teachers, i.e. young/experienced, male/female, academic/business oriented. With some teachers, students were dissatisfied.

Recommendation: Motivate teachers to acquire higher teaching grades. Increase the number of full-time employed teachers. The institution needs to have at least two teachers per course, to ensure replacement and avoid problems in the quality of teaching.

4.2 The institution does not have a human resources development plan, the dean decides about these issues. Some teachers at Libertas are allowed to participate in the graduate studies for free. There are only few full-time teachers. The management reported that it is difficult to get good people. This argument did not convince the panel team, as Libertas has sufficient financial assets to employ highly qualified people.

Recommendation: Establish a reliable, formal human development plan which covers the next couple of years. Assure that decisions are not taken depending on a single individual. Establish a formalized and transparent system for the advancement of staff. Introduce a formal timetable for teachers, which would, in addition to lectures, include research activities, publishing etc. If necessary, reduce the teaching load of teachers who engage in additional research and publishing activities. This could also include increasing the number of fully employed teachers.

4.3 The institution was not able to demonstrate that in-house employment of full-time teachers is sufficient. The institution employs 18 full-time teachers and relies heavily on external associates. According to the ASHE data, Libertas has a ration of teachers to students of 1:50 if we focus on in-house employment and 1:29 if we include external associates as well. [Comment: The management at Libertas expressed the opinion that these numbers are incorrect. It did not provide better data during the site visit.].

Recommendation:

Increase the number of full time teachers and in-house teachers. We recommend developing human resources so that at least two teachers are able to cover a course. Increase the number of fully employed teachers appointed into higher teaching grades. Where possible, reduce their workload by freeing them from other activities.

4.4 See 4.3.

4.5 Libertas does not have a policy for the development of its staff. It accepts PhD studies, for instance by arranging teaching schedules such that they do not interfere with other obligations. Teachers who work on their dissertation may do this on Friday and Saturday, as we learned during the site visit. Libertas offers some courses for the advancement of teachers.

Recommendation:

Formulate effective rules and promotion plans for the development of internal and external staff.

4.6 Libertas follows the rules given by law and has established formalized procedures on how to accomplish it.

Recommendation: Introduce additional, formal and transparent requirements for appointment to teaching grades which would further build on minimal legal conditions and be disseminated to everyone.

4.7 There is no transparent system on how the workload is determined in a fair and equitable way. During the site visit the panel team learned that the workload is 450 hours per year. At the meetings, it was reported as 12-20 hours per week. It is not known to the panel team how the institution determines the level of individual workloads and what counts in this respect. A formalized mentorship does not exist, and student counselling is done on an individual basis. Teachers did not report excessive workloads. (It should be noted that these specific statements were given while members

of the management were present, so we doubt independent opinions regarding this respect.)

Recommendation: Make the system of workload determination more transparent and implement the relevant policies. Monitor the workload of teachers, especially regarding teaching and other work not directly connected to teaching and research, and reduce it as appropriate, in a timely manner.

4.8 The institution has enough teachers. Students are generally satisfied, even though some teachers have poor reputation. Libertas heavily relies on external staff, and not every course is covered by at least two teachers. We have no information if the heavy reliance on external staff caused problems in terms of quality or fluctuations in the last years, or if this structure may be problematic.

Recommendation: Keep the satisfactory number of teachers and motivate them to deliver guest lectures at other institutions in order to gain experience. This will be enabled by reducing the teacher workload.

5. Scientific and Professional Activity

5.1 Libertas has not established or adopted formal policies which cover research activities or promote research at the institution. The institution does not give priorities for conducting research. During the site visit the team learned that the institution provides financial aid for PhD studies or participation in international conferences, but this is not seen as a step towards implementation of a framework or an overall atmosphere in which research is an important part of its activities.

Recommendation:

- **Develop a policy and a framework which covers and promotes research activities, and establish an atmosphere in which research plays an important role for all stakeholders at Libertas, especially teachers (but possibly also for motivated students). There are many aspects closely linked to these objectives and ways how the institution can promote**

research, for instance by providing formal incentives for conducting research (reduction of teaching load, bonuses, financial support system for research activities), or by establishing national and international cooperation for scientific or applied research. One way is to establish scientific or applied-oriented conferences at Libertas on a regular basis.

- We also recommend providing sufficient resources at the library, in order to establish it as a research library (possibly by a separate budget, and not only on an ad hoc basis, upon request by Libertas' teachers).
- We also recommend to the management to study the research approach of universities of applied sciences in other countries in their effort to establish reputation in research, especially with a focus on those which are comparable to Libertas and new in their relevant markets (the International School of Management in Germany comes to mind as an example).
- We also recommend to improve communication to the public and the stakeholders about activities in research and its results, for instance through publications, open days etc.

5.2 The institution has not implemented appropriate mechanisms so far; research efforts conducted by teachers of Libertas are done on an individual basis and by individual motivation, but not based on an institutional environment which supports activities systematically.

Recommendation:

Implement appropriate mechanisms and secure efficient, permanent and sustainable research activities. Create an atmosphere of research addiction. Motivate the complete faculty to participate in professional and research activities and publish. Cooperate with other institutions and businesses in Croatia and abroad in professional and research activities.

5.3 Libertas does not have cooperation with other research institutions or businesss to conduct applied research, on the national or on the international level.

Recommendation:

- **Define a short- as well as a long-term agenda for professional and research activities. Establish cooperation and develop sustainable relations with other institution.**
- **Due to the problem of fluctuation of academic staff, we recommend to establish structures and procedures which assure that the established cooperation are long-lasting and if possible independent of single individuals currently engaged at Libertas.**

5.4 The institution supports professional activities to such an extent that the external staff is also engaged in businesses, which is in line with Libertas' mission to "create ... experts for the business challenges of the future". Beyond this we were not able to get evidence for additional support with respect to professional activities.

Recommendation:

Develop the mentioned activities, for instance by developing an approach for consultancy to the industry, establishing research projects with business, or by providing research or field studies together with students, teachers and the industry. Develop sustained cooperation with national and international businesses and formalize it through cooperation agreements.

6. International Cooperation and Mobility

6.1 Formally, students have the opportunity to study abroad and the management stated that it is open towards such options. From an institutional perspective, there is no support for students in this respect. Interested students are completely left alone, and exchange does not take place at the moment. Libertas does not have an international office or somebody who is in charge of increasing students' mobility, and the management did not establish any international cooperation so far. We noted that students were quite interested in going abroad, but they face no opportunities. There is no financial support, communication to students about their possibilities does not exist,

and the curriculum - completely based on the Croatian language – does not enable any international exchange. Furthermore, the ECTS calculations have to be revised to make the courses of the curriculum internationally comparable.

Recommendation:

- **We recommend that Libertas puts substantial effort in these aspects, in order to come at least close to what it states as its mission. Due to the lack of effort so far, there are many fields of actions. As an example, we recommend establishing cooperation with institutions abroad (which would be lived in everyday college life and not only on paper), give financial and administrative support to students etc.**
- **Moreover, Libertas should establish an internationally open-minded stance to become an attractive place for foreign students to spend time, for instance by offering English-based lectures on a regular basis in its curriculum in order to get intakes from foreign institutions. This could not only help increasing the aspect of "internationalization at home", but is a necessary prerequisite for sending people abroad.**
- **Moreover, the institution could think about establishing an international summer school in order to increase the number of incoming and outgoing students. Foster student mobility, for example through the Erasmus programme. Encourage improvements which can promote student mobility, such as changes in the curricula which would make it easily comparable, or teaching in foreign languages, primarily English.**

6.2 Teachers do teach at Libertas and other institutions in Croatia, and not in an international context. The institution does not yet encourage international cooperation and mobility of its teachers. Consequently, there is no analysis of experiences so far, nor did we see an analysis of opportunities. We noted that teachers did at least attend international conferences and the institution gave financial support for that. However, this can be seen only as a very first step to increase international mobility of the teachers in giving lectures in an international context, and we do not consider it as mobility with respect to the aspect discussed here. During our site visit we noted that

neither the management nor the group of teachers were either able or willing to communicate with us in the English language, and every single word had to be translated (the students appeared more open to communicate with us in English). We wonder how the institution intends to establish international cooperation and send staff abroad for teaching in this context.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the institution establishes an environment which encourages international mobility of its teachers. One option is improvement of teachers in the English language by offering incentives to acquire internationally acknowledged certificates in the English language. Moreover, we recommend establishing a permanent system of English lectures at the institution, which also helps teachers to develop their skills ("learning by doing"). To do so, the institution should provide appropriate incentives to develop courses and teach in the English language on a regular basis. Incentives should reflect a fair treatment of the extra workload associated with the preparation and provision of English lectures, for instance by reducing the workload with respect to other teaching obligations, or by extra bonuses. Use the Erasmus programme for teacher exchange, formalize cooperation and exchange agreements with other similar institutions.

6.3 Libertas did not establish international cooperation so far. During our site visit, the management indicated that it intends to establish cooperation with a Scottish institution in the future, but this cooperation does not exist so far. The management did not give details about the contents of the envisaged cooperation or the state of negotiations. It did not mention other envisaged cooperation.

Recommendation:

- Establish international cooperation which leads to exchange of student and teachers, both incoming and outgoing. Cooperation should also focus on information exchange regarding the standards of administration and (probably joint) research.**

- **We therefore recommend focusing on a small number of institutions first, in order to establish actually lived exchanges which may be a reliable basis for future developments and enhancements. We also recommend developing an openminded and international stance of the management, which considers its school and its students as part of the international education and research society.**

6.4 Libertas does not ensure conditions for attracting students from abroad. Generally speaking, the institution set up conditions which are to a large extent in line with the Bologna process, although the curriculum concerning the calculation of the ECTS has to be revised to be an appropriate basis to attract potential students from abroad. For now, courses are taught in the Croatian language only. The management and teachers reported that some of the lectures have been taught in English in the past, but this referred to single lectures and not whole courses.

Recommendation:

- **We recommend establishing a system of lectures which is taught in English as a prerequisite for incoming students.**
- **We recommend developing this lecture system in accordance with international study requirements and standards. For instance, it is important to define which lectures are offered in English for every year of study, such that foreign students are able to cover their lectures at Libertas and later acknowledge them at their home institution without losing time. We recommend offering the same courses on a regular basis and with international quality standards, to achieve that Libertas develops as an attractive and reliable place of stay for foreigners. Establish cooperation agreements with foreign institutions in order to attract students.**

6.5 The institution does not offer a lifelong learning programme.

Recommendation:

Develop such a program according to the needs of the institution, society and potential stakeholders. An aspect for the development of the program could be to establish a closer link with the graduates, for instance by the Alumni Club.

6.6 Libertas did not establish other form of inter-institutional cooperation, nor European projects, bilateral international agreements or the like.

Recommendation:

Establish focused cooperation according to the needs of Libertas stakeholders (especially students, business etc.). We recommend taking into account if the Erasmus program could be an appropriate start. Look into opportunities and participate in the EU lifelong learning programme.

7. Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances

7.1 The equipment and the quality of classrooms at Libertas are in a good shape. The students find appropriate classrooms for their studies, including a large auditorium equipped with video-facilities. The classrooms are equipped with beamers and appropriate devices. The professors and teachers have sufficient working conditions, a few have individual offices. The institution provides a library to the students, which offers basic learning facilities, but no research facilities (see 7.5). There is no student restaurant at Libertas, nor a bar or cafe or other nice place where students could meet. There is a room available for students' self-study, but the learning environment is not motivating there. A campus atmosphere does not exist at Libertas. We would like to notice that during our site visit we learned that the institution runs a well-equipped restaurant in the cellar. It is open to students, but not used by them. Students reported it as being too expensive to be considered as a real option, some did not even know about this facility. We would like to mention that the existence and the quality level of the restaurant surprised the panel members, as its equipment appeared in contrast to what is usually offered to students at other institutions. From our experience, it only serves the needs of the management, the staff and other professionals at Libertas.

Recommendation:

- **Continue on the good way for all facilities which the institution provides to students and teachers and focus on what is to the benefit of the students and their education.**
- **We recommend setting up a study area which invites students to join, exchange views and provides a friendly and cosy atmosphere, because the informal exchange of knowledge and ideas is an important part of any study. We also recommend to set up a meeting room for students (such as a student cafe) at Libertas such that campus atmosphere may develop.**

7.2 The institution offers computer facilities with the common standards and available to the students. During our site visit and from what we learned from the self-evaluation report, we did not recognize any lacks or received complaints by the students with this respect. However, the homepage in its English version is completely outdated, stating the dates for entry exams for the academic year 2009/10 and enlisting a dean who is not active anymore.

7.3 The same as 7.2 applies here.

7.4 Libertas set up a "Board for Control and Improvement of Quality" in 2009. It consists of five members (including one student and one teacher representative) and meets twice a year. The Board composed two reports concerning the quality situation of teaching-related procedures so far, as well as an evaluation of the student surveys. However, there is no clear procedure yet and the panel was not fully satisfied with what it learned on how the student surveys translate into improvements of the lecture quality. In June 2011 Libertas received the EN ISO 9001:2008 Certificate. Also, Libertas set up a "Textbook Commission" consisting of teachers. Its task is to approve the books and mimeographs used by all teachers in their lectures.

Recommendation:

- **Continue on this path. We recommend improving the system of student surveys, especially with a focus on how student surveys can help to**

improve the teaching quality and how they should be shaped in order to enable teachers to improve their teaching quality.

- We also recommend establishing formal structures which are independent of the management in this respect (for instance by a part-time employed person responsible for the student survey system including the feedback to the teachers, administrative staff and students). Develop a formal plan for quality improvement based on the information collected from teachers, administrative staff and students. Introduce a questionnaire for teachers and try to stay in touch with alumni, and use them as a source of information.**

7.5 There is a library at Libertas, but it is clearly one of the weakest points with respect to Libertas facilities. It is located in the cellar and not exposed to daylight. It does not provide a motivating study atmosphere. There is only limited space, just two computers are available. The library offers a basic amount of textbooks to students with a rather strict level of liberty with respect to their needs (students are obliged to return textbooks after the completion of a course; alternatively, they are requested to buy the book at a reduced rate). The library is open between 10 am and 5:30 pm only. The quantity of books offered is not convincing and provides (if at all) basic resources. Students reported that they were able to just find the most important textbooks in the library, but not more. When asked how they search for scientific texts, the answer was that they either switch to better equipped libraries or use "Google, because you find everything there". In sum, the library is in not a quality research library, and the quality with respect to being a student library is very poor.

Recommendation:

- We recommend improving the library both in quality, quantity and with respect to its location.**
- We recommend setting up a library that offers appropriate studying conditions for the students, including tables to work at and exposure to daylight.**

- **We recommend offering the most important national and international newspapers and magazines at the library, including a reading area to access them. We recommend increasing the number of available books, journals, and other resources helpful in studying and doing research (i.e. JSTOR, Econlit or other databases, additional contents of newspapers and magazines like The Financial Times, The Economist etc.). The management should engage all stakeholders - and especially the teachers - to propose the acquisition of books and journals on a regular basis. It is the teachers who are best informed about important contributions. We recommend establishing the library also as a research library, with separate budgets for media related to teaching and research.**

7.6 The ratio of teaching and non-teaching staff is appropriate. A strategic planning cycle does not exist.

Recommendation:

We recommend continuing with an optimal ratio, regularly monitoring it and developing a strategic planning cycle.

7.7 We learned from the self-evaluation report, that in 2009 Libertas generated an income of 27 mil. kn, transferred from 2008 additional 19 mil. kn, and had total expenditures of 11 mil. kn. This leads to a surplus of approx. 35 mil. kn in 2009. The picture for 2010 is 28 mil. kn income, plus 8 mil. kn transfer from 2009, with expenditures of 13 mil. kn, leading to a surplus of approx. 23 mil. kn in 2010. The financial situation is good. Libertas has substantial resources available to enhance the quality of the study programs and the conditions students find at the institution. We do not have any indication that Libertas might run out of business for financial reasons, which might make it impossible for students to finish their studies, nor do we see any current financial threats to the stability of the institution.

Recommendation: Develop a formal income and expenditure plan, a long-term and a short-term one, in order to effectively plan future development.

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EXPERT PANEL FOR THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Strenghts

The panel members notice the overall good atmosphere at Libertas and the positive attitude of all stakeholders. The mixture of the teachers is good, they are interested to improve and develop the students, themselves and Libertas as such. Overall, the studying situation at the institution is good and all rooms are suitably equipped. Libertas did already formalize many rules and procedures, for instance by establishing the Quality Board or evaluating the students' questionnaires. From a formal perspective, the programs are aligned with the Bologna process, and the management intends to develop new programs. Students are satisfied with the learning conditions at Libertas, they can have a direct contact to their teachers.

Weaknesses

There are rules which are not fully formalized yet, for instance the quality feedback of the students and how it translates into teaching improvements. The institution also lacks a strategy for its development according to its mission and vision, including a strategy for the financial development, considering the fact that this is a non-profit institution which is obliged to invest any surplus in the development of the institution and its staff, and improving studying and teaching standards. Libertas does not provide support for international student exchanges, the aspect of internationalization being almost non-existent. There is a lack of national and international guest lecturing, and the students do not get support by a career centre nor do applied field research in their studies. There is also a lack of support for independent or applied research at the institution, and Libertas does not provide substantial incentives in this respect.

Recommendations for improvement of quality

The recommendations which follow present the most important ones among all recommendations listed in the text above. The institution should consider the recommendations for each criterion, regardless of the grade and if they are repeated below.

We would like to note first that we strongly recommend that the management focuses its efforts to enhance the studying condition of the students and the working conditions of its teachers (the latter with respect to research). Accordingly, we recommend enhancing the overall studying conditions, for instance by establishing effective services to the benefit of the students, like a career centre and an international office. We also recommend setting up a recreational area for the students (like a cafe or lounge), where they can meet and exchange ideas in an informal way. Self-studying conditions should be improved as well. This includes the library, which should be better equipped, exposed to daylight and offer suitable working conditions for all students.

We recommend improving with respect to the aspects of internationalization and research. The aspect of internationalization includes establishing a lecture system at Libertas such that the institution becomes an attractive place for foreign students to stay. Libertas should also effectively support students in their effort to study abroad. We also recommend improving the aspect of internationalization with respect to staff exchange, i.e. by sending teachers abroad or inviting guest lecturers who are able to teach in English. With respect to applied and scientific research, Libertas should provide incentives which reward scientific efforts, for instance by providing workload reductions, financial awards, grants or sabbaticals. The library should be expanded to also offer research facilities.

These recommendations list the problems which require increased efforts from the institution, which has to create the conditions necessary to solve them. The panel listed the main recommendations, but this list is not exhaustive and recommendations should be taken in account even if the connected criteria were assessed with good grades (4 or 5). The institution should not only introduce the required changes, but also regularly monitor their effectiveness.

In addition to the recommendations mentioned in this report, we advise the institution to continuously improve the quality criteria not listed above, which are necessary to even further improve the quality of its work. Regarding the criteria which have been mostly or fully implemented, we advise the institution to continue the good work and try on daily basis to improve it even further.

Additional documents

1. Visit protocol of University College of Applied Sciences Libertas
2. Filled in form for the estimation of quality