



agency for science and higher education

**REPORT  
OF THE EXPERT PANEL  
ON THE  
RE-ACCREDITATION OF  
VERN' UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

**Date of site visit:**

9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES</b>	<b>7</b>
ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION	7
DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION	7
<b>LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL GOOD PRACTICES</b>	<b>7</b>
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE	7
<b>ANALYSIS OF EACH ASSESSMENT AREA, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH ASSESSMENT AREA</b>	<b>8</b>
I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution	8
II. Study programmes	8
III. Teaching process and student support	8
IV. Teaching and institutional capacities	8
V. Professional and/or scientific activity	8
<b>DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EACH STANDARD, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH STANDARD</b>	<b>9</b>
I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution	9
II. Study programmes	10
III. Teaching process and student support	11
IV. Teaching and institutional capacities	12
V. Professional and/or scientific activity	13
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>22</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (the Agency) is an independent legal entity with public authority, registered in the court register, and a full member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

All public and private higher education institutions are subject to re-accreditation, which is conducted in five-year cycles by the Agency, in accordance with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and subordinate regulations, and by following *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and good international practice in quality assurance of higher education and science.

The Agency's Accreditation Council appointed an independent Expert Panel for the evaluation of the VERN' University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter VERN').

Members of the Expert Panel:

1. Prof.dr.sc. Sunčica Oberman Peterka, Faculty of Economics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Republic of Croatia – president of the panel
2. Mr.sc. Stjepan Lacković, Baltazar Polytechnic in Zaprešić, Republic of Croatia
3. Dr.sc. Monika Metykova, School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
4. FH-Prof. Mag. Michael Mair, Fachhochschule für Management & Kommunikation, Wien, Federal Republic of Austria
5. Duje Skender, student, Polytechnic of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

During the site visit, the Expert Panel held meetings with the following stakeholders:

- Management
- Self-evaluation Report committee and representatives of the QA
- Students
- Heads of study programmes
- Full-time teaching staff
- Assistants and junior researchers
- External associates
- Representatives of the business sector, potential employers.

The Expert Panel members had a tour of the work facilities, laboratories, library, IT classrooms, student administration office and classrooms, and attended sample lectures, where they held a brief Q&A session with students.

In accordance with the site visit protocol, the Expert Panel examined the available additional documents and study programme descriptions (learning outcomes).

The Expert Panel drafted this Report on the re-accreditation of VERN' on the basis of VERN' self-evaluation report, other relevant documents and site visit.

The Report contains the following elements:

- short description of the evaluated higher education institution
- brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages
- list of institutional good practices
- analysis of each assessment area, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each assessment area
- detailed analysis of each standard, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each standard
- appendices (quality assessment summary by each assessment area and standard, and site visit protocol)
- summary.

In the analysis of the documentation, site visit to the VERN' and writing of the Report, the Expert Panel was supported by:

- Vlatka Šušnjak Kuljiš, coordinator, ASHE
- Frano Pavić, assistant coordinator, ASHE
- Lida Lamza, interpreter at the site visit and translator of the Report, ASHE

On the basis of the re-accreditation procedure conducted, and with the prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues a following accreditation recommendation to the Minister for Higher Education and Science:

1. **issuance of a confirmation on compliance with the requirements** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities
2. **denial of license** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities
3. **issuance of a letter of expectation** with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to three years. A letter of expectation can include the suspension of student enrolment within a set period.

The accreditation recommendation also includes a quality grade of a higher education institution, and recommendations for quality improvement.

# SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

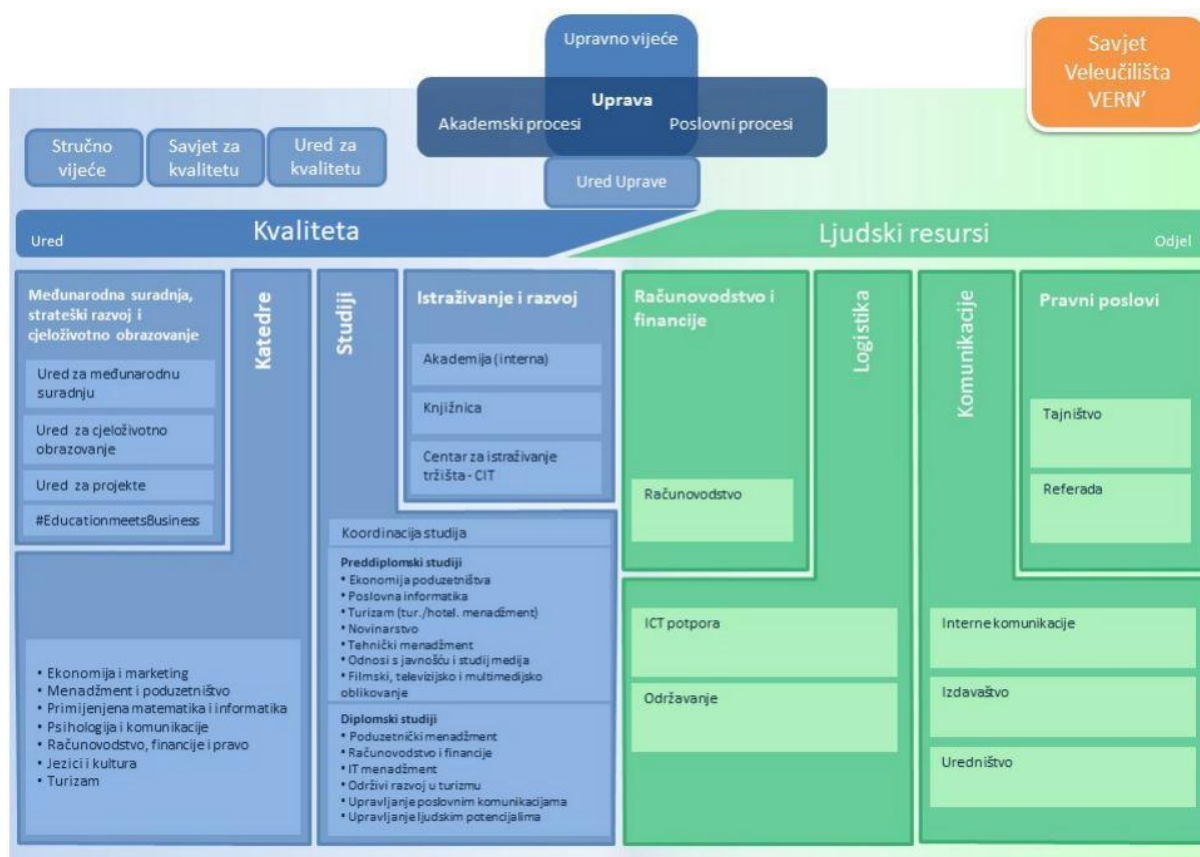
**NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:** VERN' University of Applied Sciences

**ADDRESS:** Trg bana Josipa Jelačića 3, Zagreb

**DEAN:** prof. Vlatko Cvrtila Ph.D.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:

*Based on the information provided by the institution.*



**STUDY PROGRAMMES:**

*Based on the Self-evaluation report on page 5, Table 1: Overview of the study programmes of the institution*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of the study programme</b>	<b>Type of programme</b>	<b>Education provider</b>	<b>No. ECTS credits</b>	<b>HKO **Level</b>
1.	Business Informatics	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
2.	Entrepreneurship Economics	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
3.	Film, TV and Multimedia Design	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
4.	Journalism	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
5.	Public Relations and Media Studies	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
6.	Technical management	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
7.	Tourism; specialisations in: Tourism Management, Hotel Management	Undergraduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	180	6.
8.	Accounting and Finance	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.

9.	Business Communication Administration	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.
10.	Entrepreneurship Management	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.
11.	Human Resource Management	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.
12.	IT Management	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.
13.	Sustainable Tourism Management	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.
14.	Film and television, directing and production <sup>1</sup>	Specialist graduate professional study programme	VERN Polytechnic	120	7.

\*\* Croatian Qualification Framework

Source: Data generated from the Mozvag Module Browser

<sup>1</sup> – Film and television, directing and production - License from 28.03.2019. – first generation will be enroll in academic year 2019/20

## NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

*The number of students per study programme for the current academic year is given in Table 3.1 in the Analytic supplement to the Self-evaluation report on page 2.*

Study programme name	Full-time students	Part-time students
Business Informatics (470)	89	35
Entrepreneurship Economics (471)	390	170
Film, TV and Multimedia Design (481)	64	5
Journalism (478)	90	3
Public Relations and Media Studies (479)	200	65



Technical Management (477)	41	22
Tourism; specialisations in: Tourism Management, Hotel Management (469)	352	61
Total number for undergraduate level	1226	361
Accounting and Finance (475)	113	19
Business Communication Administration (474)	51	17
Entrepreneurship Management (473)	83	18
Human Resource Management (480)	22	5
IT Management (472)	16	8
Sustainable Tourism Management (476)	45	9
Total number for graduate level	330	76
Total number of students on all study programmes	1556	437
Total number of students	1993	

#### NUMBER OF TEACHERS:

*The structure of teachers is given in Table 4.1.b in the Analytic supplement to the Self-evaluation report on page 19.*

Staff	Full-time staff	Cumulative employment	External associates
College professors	5	-	16
Senior lecturers	22	-	25
Lecturers	28	-	67
Lectors	-	-	-
Full professors with tenure	-	-	4
Full professors	1	-	4
Associate professors	1	-	9

Assistant professors	-	-	14
Expert assistants	-	-	-
Assistants	12	-	53
Technical staff	8	-	-
Administrative staff	21	1	-
Support staff	-	-	-

## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

VERN' was founded in 1990 as the first private business college in Croatia. Its educational activities started in 1994 as a one-year programme. With the approval of the former Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia VERN' Polytechnic was established in 2000 and in 2007 it became the first Croatian business polytechnic. In the following years of 2009 and 2011 VERN' Polytechnic merged with Zagreb School of Management as well as the School of Journalism, which enabled VERN' to develop new programmes in disciplines outside of business and attract new students. As a result of a successful cooperation with the town of Vis, in 2012 VERN' opened VERN' Island School on the island of Vis, one of the most unique and well-preserved Mediterranean islands. With further mergers including the Polytechnic School of Zagreb and Kairos College in Zagreb, VERN' continues to grow (expand its programme) and maintain its position as the leading polytechnic in Croatia.

## **BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

### **ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION**

1. VERN' is internally organized in a highly functional manner, it has developed procedures and systems that ensure the smooth running of the institution.
2. VERN' maintains a large network of relationships with various stakeholders, its greatest strength is the close co-operation with stakeholders in the various industries that VERN' graduates are employable in.
3. The vocational focus and orientation to industries/businesses are pursued vigorously, the institution is very engaged in this respect.
4. The institution's organizational culture, the learning environment and the overall atmosphere are very positive.
5. VERN' teachers are highly motivated and immersed in the learning process.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION (SPACES FOR IMPROVEMENT)**

1. There is a lack of differentiation between undergraduate and graduate programmes in terms of learning outcomes and assessments strategies.
2. The panel of experts understands that some work has already been conducted on clarifying learning outcomes (LOs), there remains a number of issues as learning outcomes at programme and course levels do not follow Bloom's taxonomy to full extent. LOs should reflect all six levels as described in the taxonomy - i.e. knowledge, comprehension, application, analyses, syntheses, evaluation.
3. Similarly to the point above, there are areas of improvement when it comes to ECTS credits, namely the division of ECTS credits within some courses needs to be improved.
4. While the expert panel understands that as a polytechnic VERN' is under no legal obligation to develop significant scientific research activities, however, research on professional practice and knowledge exchange is inadequate. Professional research needs to be intensified and more tightly connected to teaching practice.
5. The expert panel has unanimously agreed that one of VERN's main strengths is student support and it is also listed as an example of good practice, however, there is a potential drawback to this. The panel is concerned about the lack of guidance on how student support is practiced. The lack of policy and guiding principles can result in undue pressures on staff availability (including outside normal working hours) and can be detrimental to staff well-being and a desirable work-life balance.

## **LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL GOOD PRACTICES**

### **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

1. VERN' has developed an extensive range of training programmes that contribute to staff development and ensure the quality of the teaching provided. It is not only the VERN' Academy initiative that is commendable but also all other support for personal development of all employees.
2. VERN' has developed an impressive student support system, this includes a tutoring system and other initiatives such as Design Your Career project.
3. VERN' has developed a well-functioning formalized alumni network that is represented by the Alumni Club.

### **ANALYSIS OF EACH ASSESSMENT AREA, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH ASSESSMENT AREA**

#### **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

##### **Analysis**

The expert panel found that the quality assurance system and its development is in line with VERN's long-term strategic planning and an extensive amount of work has been completed to date. However, the panel found some insufficiencies in the implementation of the quality assurance framework as despite the procedures and policies in place the learning outcomes at degree and course level are not entirely appropriate and in some cases the distribution of ECTS credits within courses lacks internal consistency. Another area that requires more attention is development of professional and scientific research. The expert panel paid close attention to the current strategic planning document (2010-2020) and noted that it included all the elements that are to be expected and the strategy relies on various methods for collecting data on VERN's processes, resources and results, the institution also relies on monitoring mechanisms and uses these to effectively manage and improve its activities. But, since this strategy will expire next year, strategic planning for the future period should be more present.

The institution supports the professional development of teachers in a variety of ways: VERN' Academy is one example of good practice in support for teachers, it provides training at a professional and high quality level. VERN's human resource management is particularly linked to the needs of businesses for which they prepare their students.

VERN' did not provide the expert panel with any written or oral evidence in relation to a plan for improvements and their implementation in relation to the above listed recommendations from the 2011 re-accreditation process.

Evidence provided in the self-evaluation report and supplementary documents proves VERN's commitment to academic integrity and freedom

Evidence provided in the self-analysis report, supplementary documents and in interviews with various stakeholders shows that Vern is regularly updating and informing the public about relevant information and data. But, at the same time, information on the VERN' website in English is only available in relation to two study programmes that are taught in the English language and the Erasmus programme. Since internationalization forms a key part of VERN's strategic plan, not having information available in English is detrimental to this effort.

VERN's understanding of the business needs and its connection to the business community are at a very highly developed level and for this reason the institution is at an excellent position to respond to the needs of the labour market.

The provision of lifelong learning programmes is in line with VERN's strategic goals as described in the 2010-2020 strategy and they are closely aligned with the needs of businesses and the labour market.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The overall quality assurance system and the procedures of quality assurance are well established but improvements can be made in the implementation and monitoring of certain elements: learning outcomes, ECTS allocation within individual courses, consistency of implementation across all study programmes and the development of research/professional activities.

The institutional approach to work on recommendations from re-accreditation visits needs to improve significantly,

VERN' should make all the information on their web sites available in both Croatian and English languages.

More engagement with the local community, like in the study on the development of the municipality of Vis, is also desirable.

Quality grade: Satisfactory level of quality

## **II. Study programmes**

### Analysis

The expert panel found that general goals of most of study programmes are in line with VERN's main strategic plan (Strategy 2020). The study programmes are very practically orientated, thus contributing to one of the main educational aims stressed in the Strategy 2020, which is to provide students with knowledge and competences required for launching their own private businesses. In that respect, the involvement of representatives of the businesses/industries in the planning and development of the

programmes is exemplary, also helping to align the general objectives of study programmes with the needs of the labour market. VERN' also provided evidence about the process of improvements to the study programmes based on feedback from students, their teachers and external stakeholders. Learning outcomes of the study programmes are clearly defined and they are generally aligned with learning outcomes at course level. Although VERN' provided evidence that they created a system of quality assurance regarding learning outcomes, there are some shortcomings related to this issue. Firstly, the LOs of study programmes, and especially for individual courses, are not always in line with required levels as defined in CroQF. Secondly, LOs from different years of the same study programmes are very similar and do not reflect progression. Finally, the distinction between undergraduate and graduate levels of study is not very clear, i.e. LOs do not reflect progression between these two levels. The expert panel also found some significant areas for improvement in the allocation of ECTS credits within individual courses, since the spread of ECTS credits does not necessarily reflect the workload associated with various learning outcomes and assessments. Student practice is integral part of all of study programmes, it is very well organized and it is carried out in a systematic and responsible manner. Student work experience opportunities are also well organized and play a key role in achieving the objectives.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The study programmes are well structured and cover all important topics. The learning outcomes have to be revised in two directions: Firstly, Bloom's taxonomy should be applied properly and all levels should be used. This will also affect the variety of assessment modes on individual courses. Secondly the differences between the undergraduate and the graduate programmes have to follow the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (CroQF). There is a need to revise and appropriately allocate ECTS credits for core and other courses based on solid pedagogical reasoning. Attendance - and potentially participation - should not be part of assessments.

Quality grade: Satisfactory level of quality

### **III. Teaching process and student support**

#### Analysis

VERN's learning environment is highly supportive and efficient and it is important that all stakeholders feel supported and have their voices heard.

VERN' teachers - and the institution overall - use a variety of teaching methods, delivery styles etc. to achieve the learning outcomes of individual courses and study programmes. The dedication and engagement that VERN' teachers demonstrated is very high, evidence

of this has come up in interviews with current students as well as alumni and also in examples provided by teachers and technicians.

VERN' collects and monitors data on student's progress, pass rates and on completion rates. Information on these processes is set out in the Ordinance.

It is evident that VERN' effectively recognizes prior learning, what was confirmed in positive feedback by students and alumni who have transferred from other institutions. The technologies used are state-of-the art, the expert panel saw the studio, the incubator lab and other facilities.

Student support is recognized as a particular strength of VERN'. The institution has developed a series of support mechanisms, including counselling for study, a student representative for each cohort, personal development support and advising on individual basis is also available. VERN' employs an adequate number of qualified and committed professional, administrative and technical staff and it has developed its own software for student record keeping.

Internationalization is a key part of VERN's strategic plan and the institution has conducted significant amounts of work in providing study programmes in the English language. VERN' has a growing number of students who use the opportunity to study abroad or to complete their work experience abroad and there is a solid process in place for the recognition of ECTS credits gained.

The expert panel also considered the range and appropriateness of assessment modes on individual courses and arrived at the conclusion that improvements can be made in this respect, especially in the courses where the focus is on the development of practical skills. Since the number of students on many study programmes is not excessively high, other modes of assessments could be applied easily and reflect more on the knowledge, skills and competences achieved by students.

VERN's alignment with the needs of the labour market is one of its major strengths. The institutions carries out a lot of work around monitoring the needs of the labour markets, work placements that occasionally lead to employment, the development of skills necessary for the workplace.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel was very impressed with the entrance exam that VERN' developed and recommends to make it compulsory for all applicants.

The expert panel believes that it is very important for VERN' to calibrate the distinction between student-centred and student-led teaching more carefully. The expert panel strongly recommends the introduction of measures that will increase students' independent learning. It is important that this is not merely a numerical value, i.e. certain numbers of hours are allocated to it but that students develop habits that will make them independent learners and practitioners. The expert panel is highly supportive of processes that make the students' voices heard but wants to express a concern about -

possibly unintended - undue pressure on teachers that an over-reliance on student feedback in management decisions is most likely to result in. VERN management also needs to be more distinctive when it comes to ensuring that the extensive student support on a one-to-one basis does not interfere with teachers' work/life balance.

There is a need for further work on motivating students for going abroad and considering various forms of incentives (including financial ones) for using Erasmus mobility possibilities to go abroad and strengthen their international network, language capabilities etc.

The expert panel recommends that more work is carried out on the alignment of learning outcomes with assessments and that where needed corrections are made to the modes of assessment and the teaching methods.

Quality grade: High level of quality

#### **IV. Teaching and institutional capacities**

##### **Analysis**

There are sufficient number of lecturers overall at the institutional level and for each study programme with the majority appointed in appropriate fields. The ratio of students and full-time teachers at VERN' is satisfactory and it ensures good quality of study. Teachers' workload is in line with relevant legislation and policies and it allows enough time for professional and/or scientific activities, however, these should be improved significantly. VERN' employs a large number of external associates (a total of 192) in various types of teaching roles, including supervision. This is closely in line with the institution's mission and its focus on the preparation of students for employment in specific businesses/industries.

VERN's recruitment strategy is closely aligned with the institution's strategic plans. VERN' has relied on close co-operation with external associates as teachers in the long term and this approach provides the institution with a strong pool for the selection of its teaching staff. VERN' follows the requirements of the Croatian legal framework when appointing to teaching grades. Concerns have been raised about the speed (actually lack of it) of progression for employees in these roles - the expert panel found gaps in the incorporation of indicators of excellence in professional and teaching activities in the promotion criteria.

VERN' has developed a training programme on teaching competencies which is tailored for the needs of teachers at various stages in their careers. VERN' has a system of peer review observations in place and co-teaching/co-mentoring as part of extended the skills of its teachers.



VERN' pays close attention to the resourcing for its study programmes and these resources are not only appropriate for the achievement of learning outcomes but are also of high quality. The resourcing is in line with VERN's strategic plans and mission.

VERN' has increased its expenditure on the library and library resources, but more should be done regarding investing in library resources, such as the dated nature of the literature that forms essential reading and is available in the library.

VERN's financial sustainability is a key concern for the institution's management and financial resources are used efficiently and are allocated appropriately.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The institution could define some internal criteria for promotion of lecturers, demanding certain number of publication in scientific or/and professional journals as this could be an efficient way of improving this activity. The expert panel is of the opinion that each full-time lecturer should publish at least one paper each year, especially lecturers at graduate level.

The expert panel recommends the acquisition of most up-to-date literature and its linking to learning outcomes.

The discrepancy between the significant financial investment in spaces/resources and the financial investment in staff's professional development and mobility is not in line with VERN's strategic goals. More significant financial incentives in professional development could help in achieving higher level of professional and scientific activity.

Quality grade: High level of quality

### **V. Professional and/or scientific activity**

#### Analysis

As already noted in Section 4 the expert panel found very little evidence that would confirm that VERN' employee achieve the desired quality and quantity of scientific or professional outputs as required of an institution of this type. Publications in scientific/professional journals are lacking in all areas of teaching. VERN's focus on the needs of the labour market has been noted in various sections of this report and the expert panel acknowledges the institution's successes in this respect. In contrast, VERN' should do more work on developing its understanding of broader social needs and the needs of local communities and on gearing its professional/scientific and research activities in this direction as well. The expert panel noted that while VERN' actively sought knowledge exchange with stakeholders from businesses and industries that it prepares students for, this exchange appears to be one-directional with stakeholders influencing VERN's teaching and professional activities as well as long-term strategic plans. Yet, the expert panel believes that knowledge exchange is essential in both

directions, i.e. VERN' should also be able to provide industries and businesses with knowledge that will help them achieve their goals. While the expert panel understands the legal requirements as to the types of research that VERN' is obliged to undertake, examples of VERN' teachers' professional/scientific achievements and their recognition are scarce. VERN' co-operates closely with professional associations that are linked to particular industries (PR, tourism etc.), the expert panel, however, noted the lack of engagement with professional associations that are connected to scientific/professional research. While the expert panel acknowledges that VERN' has developed ways in which professional/scientific activities are incorporated into teaching, there is space for growth in this area. The expert panel is particularly keen to see VERN' teachers' professional/scientific research informing undergraduate students' final pieces of work and the teaching at graduate level.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends the introduction of a formal policy that would guide growth in this area. VERN' has an ad hoc arrangement in place to support staff attending conferences but, for example, a set of internal criteria for promotion could be introduced to encourage the publication of scientific/professional outputs, attendance at conferences etc.

The expert panel recommends that VERN' develops its activities that relate to broader social needs in more depth.

The expert panel also encourages VERN' to develop knowledge exchange in both directions, i.e. to increase the flow of knowledge generated by VERN' to businesses and industries.

The expert panel recommends the establishment of a research group and a regular series of research events.

The expert panel recommends that in order to enable growth in professional/scientific research and its quality, VERN' introduces formal and effective incentives.

The expert panel also recommends that VERN' encourages its teachers to be members of professional organizations that focus on professional/scientific research.

The expert panel recommends that VERN' develops more formal and effective ways of recognizing and rewarding professional/scientific achievements.

The expert panel also recommends that VERN' encourages its teachers to increase the connection between their professional/scientific research and their teaching and that they involve students, particularly at graduate level, in professional research projects a part of their learning.

Quality grade: Minimum level of quality

## **DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EACH STANDARD, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH STANDARD**

### **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

#### **1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.**

Prior to the site visit to VERN', members of the expert have studied the self-evaluation report and supplementary documents. During the site visit further documents related to the internal quality assurance system were inspected by the expert panel and further evidence was gathered in meetings with the senior management team, representatives of students, alumni, stakeholders, teachers and other staff. The expert panel received satisfactory answers in all meetings and it is evident that the quality assurance system covers all VERN' activities, it involves all the stakeholders and that the underlying documentation (Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Assurance Manual) for it is in place as well as various policies and procedures.

The expert panel found that the quality assurance system and its development is in line with VERN's long-term strategic planning and an extensive amount of work has been completed to date. However, the panel found some insufficiencies in the implementation of the quality assurance framework as despite the procedures and policies in place the learning outcomes at degree and course level are not entirely appropriate and in some cases the distribution of ECTS credits within courses lacks internal consistency. The panel believes that the internal consistency of study programmes needs to be increased. Another area that requires more attention is development of professional research.

The expert panel paid close attention to the current strategic planning document (2010-2020) and noted that it included all the elements that are to be expected and the strategy relies on various methods for collecting data on VERN's processes, resources and results, the institution also relies on monitoring mechanisms and uses these to effectively manage and improve its activities. But, since this strategy will expire next year, strategic planning for the future period should be more present.

The institution supports the professional development of teachers in a variety of ways: VERN' Academy is one example of good practice in support for teachers, it provides training at a professional and high quality level. VERN's human resource management is particularly linked to the needs of businesses for which they prepare their students.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The overall quality assurance system and the procedures of quality assurance are well established but improvements can be made in the implementation and monitoring of

certain elements: learning outcomes, ECTS allocation within individual courses, consistency of implementation across all study programmes and the development of research/professional activities.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.**

The panel of experts took part in a re-accreditation process and was shown evidence from a previous re-accreditation visit (2011) that made recommendations for improvement in the following areas:

- a. international mobility of staff and students: the expert panel concluded that some progress has been made between the re-accreditation visit in 2011 and that in April 2019
- b. increased investment in library and research infrastructure: the expert panel has considered the budgets for the library in particular and noted the increase from 41,000 kuna (2008) to 2 million kuna (2016). The expert panel acknowledges the importance of e-resources, particularly e-books but wants to encourage VERN' to refresh some of the dated literature and make hard/e-copies of the latest literature available to students.
- c. increased number of staff with scientific qualifications: the expert panel had access to VERN' documents submitted for the 2011 re-accreditation visit that stated plans for twenty teachers to receive PhDs. While we understand that institutional plans are influenced by staff fluctuations and other factors, the evidence provided for the 2019 re-accreditation visit states that there are 14 members of staff with PhDs. Considering the growth in student numbers between 2011 and 2019 together with the expansion of study programmes (including the introduction of some programmes in English), this number is insufficient and a major weakness.
- d. procedures for student complaints/problems to be made more transparent: the expert panel was satisfied that this recommendation was fully implemented.
- e. regular feedback from alumni: the expert panel was satisfied that this recommendation was fully implemented.

VERN' did not provide the 2019 expert panel with any written or oral evidence in relation to a plan for improvements and their implementation in relation to the above listed recommendations from the 2011 re-accreditation.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The institutional approach to work on recommendations from re-accreditation visits needs to improve significantly, the expert panel was particularly struck by the lack of any reference to the 2011 re-accreditation visit and its conclusions prior to our site visit and during the site visit.

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.**

Evidence provided in the self-evaluation report and supplementary documents proves VERN's commitment to academic integrity and freedom. The Code of Ethics has been introduced and implemented and it deals with key ethical parameters. The Ethics Committee has been established to deal with unethical behaviour and all procedures connected to instances of unethical behaviour are covered by ordinance of study. Students undergo training in how to avoid unethical behaviour and plagiarism detection software PlagScan has been implemented by VERN' although its use is not obligatory.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends to make the use of PlagScan obligatory for all submissions.

#### Quality grade

High level of quality

### **1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, professional and/or scientific and social role).**

VERN' makes detailed information about study programmes available on its website [www.vern.hr](http://www.vern.hr), the information in Croatian language is publicly available and extensive enough. Evidence provided in the self-analysis report, supplementary documents and in interviews with various stakeholders satisfied the panel in terms of updating and informing the public about relevant information and data. Information on the VERN' website is available in English only in relation to two study programmes that are taught in the English language and the Erasmus programme, please see <https://www.vernuni.eu/>. Internationalization forms a key part of VERN's strategic plan and not having information available in English is detrimental to this effort. However, perhaps even more importantly the availability of only select information in English can be potentially misleading.

Recommendations for improvement

VERN' should make all the information on all its online sites available in both Croatian and English.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.**

VERN's understanding of the business needs and its connection to the business community are at a very highly developed level and for this reason the institution is at an excellent position to respond to the needs of the labour market. VERN' students benefit from these outstanding connections with industry specialists in a number of ways, through teaching, internships, the Alumni Club, EducationmeetsBusiness etc. VERN' is also engaged in activities that are of direct benefit to the community that they are part of, particularly on the island of Vis (the study on the development of the municipality of Vis).

Recommendations for improvement

While the expert panel understands that VERN's main focus is vocational education and hence the close links with and prioritization of the connection with Croatian businesses is of key importance, we would like to recommend the inclusion of scientific researchers in advisory roles - including international experts - as those researching the industries that VERN' prepares students for can provide important insights into trends and paint a more detailed picture of the industries in their complexity than those who are working in these. A combination of insights from business/industry professional and scientists would benefit VERN's long-term strategic goals.

More engagement with the local community, like in the study on the development of the municipality of Vis is also desirable.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.**

Thus far VERN' has developed and delivered lifelong learning programmes in the areas of tourism, communication and marketing, IT and security management. The provision of these is in line with VERN's strategic goals as described in the 2010-2020 strategy. VERN's

lifelong learning - similarly to its undergraduate and graduate programmes - is closely aligned with the needs of businesses and the labour market.

List of Life Long Learning programmes:

1. Tourist Guide
2. Travel Agency Manager
3. Restaurant and Banquet Manager
4. Front Office manager
5. Introduction in Storytelling
6. Introduction to Guerrilla Communication
7. Java Programming
8. Security Management

Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends the development of formalized procedures - ordinances - for the development of lifelong learning programmes, including learning outcomes. It is also desirable to continue the collection of data and the analysis of these in relation to the profile of participants, social and business needs etc.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **II. Study programmes**

**2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the demands of the labour market.**

VERN's strategic plan, its mission and its activities are clearly focused on the demands of the labour market at the local, regional and national levels and the study programmes are developed and delivered accordingly. VERN' conducts regular analyses of the resources required for the delivery of study programmes and the portfolio of their programmes and plans for its expansion are clearly justified.

Recommendations for improvement

The "Strategic Framework for Development 2010 - 2020" from May 2010 should be renewed and adapted to the time period 2020 - 2025.

Quality grade

High level of quality

## **2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.**

The members of the expert panel identified shortcomings related to the learning outcomes (LOs) and provide detailed examples of some of the issues identified below. These are not intended as a comprehensive account of all the study programmes but rather as an indication of types of issues - and how to remedy these.

Analysis of the undergraduate study programme “Entrepreneurship Economics (EE)” and the graduate programme “Entrepreneurship Management (EM)”: The programmes cover all important topics in the area and there is a relevant difference between the programmes. But the formulation of the Learning Outcomes (LOs) should be revised – as some of the used verbs are not in line with Bloom’s taxonomy – verbs like “talk”, “use” or “learn” cannot be quantified and should therefore not be used. The majority of verbs used originate from the basic levels of the taxonomy – remember, understand and apply. Especially in the 3rd year of EE and in the entire EM programme competences like analysing, evaluating or creating should be included. The usage of these verbs will also affect the variety of the assessments.

Analysis of the undergraduate study programme “Tourism (T)” and the graduate programme “Sustainable Tourism Management (STM)”: The content of both programmes is practically oriented and well selected. The undergraduate programme allows in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year a specialisation in important fields of Croatian tourism. The graduate programme could have some more topics about sustainability like “Overtourism”, “Responsible Tourism”, development and sustainability, cooperation and tourism or the UN SDGs. In each semester there is one course with 6 ECTS (Course ID: 6814\_1, 6934\_1, 6936\_1) but only 5 ECTS are distributed in the syllabus. In both programmes Bloom’s taxonomy should be applied properly. So the competences should be measurable and fit the level of the programme. There must be a difference between undergraduate and graduate programmes in the levels.

Analysis of the undergraduate study programme “Technical Management (TM)”: The study programme is well structured and all of the core learning outcomes are covered by multiple courses. The majority of LOs use proper verbs such as “analyse”, “critically evaluate” or “manage”, that are in line with Bloom’s taxonomy Level 6. However, some of the verbs such as “communicate” and “apply” should be replaced with more proper ones. Analysis of the graduate specialist programme “Accounting and Finance”: Structure of the study programme is good and courses are organized in logical way and build expand students’ knowledge. The learning outcomes of the programme are logically defined and they show the main focus of the study programme. Learning outcomes of the programme are defined using mainly verbs associated with the first three levels (mainly the third one)



of Bloom's taxonomy, this is not appropriate for a graduate programme that is on the seventh level of CroQF - more focus on developing skills for analyses, synthesis and evaluation is needed for this programmes at this. Also, the matrix of LOs of the study programme shows that the LO (RIF 17) is covered only by one course - this LO should be covered by many more courses in the programme.

LOs on course level are much simpler and the majority of them remain at the first two levels of Bloom's taxonomy, this should be changed - not only on the level of the LOs, but on the level of actual practice on the course.

Analysis of the graduate specialist programme Human resource management: the programme content covers all important topic and is organized in logical way. LOs of the study programme are mainly in line with level 7 of the CroQF, but LOs on course level are sometimes too simple; they should be more complex and aim to develop analytical and critical skills of students at graduate level programme.

Similarly to the above mentioned programmes of study, the Journalism programme is well organized overall and covers all the topics that are to be expected. The LOs for the study programmes are in line with level 6 as defined in CroQF. There is space for improvement in the LOs for individual courses on the Journalism study programme. This particularly concerns the way in which progression between individual years of study is reflected in the LOs. One example in this respect: there are three inter-related courses taught in Years 1, 2 and 3 but their LOs are very similar and do not reflect progression and deepening of knowledge, comprehension, evaluation etc., namely:

#### Year 1 Croatian Language and Culture (3550\_1)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define some of the most important rules of the standard Croatian language.
- Apply those rules by analogy on new examples.
- Identify language mistakes in print media and media language in general.
- Write a literate text free of language mistakes.
- Express their opinion about particular unsolved problems of linguistic norms, supported by arguments.
- Use normative linguistic reference books.

#### Year 2 Basics of Journalistic Style (3897\_1)

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Define the rules for different functional styles (especially journalistic and administrative).
- Implement those rules on new examples.
- Identify inappropriate language usage for particular functional style.
- Define allowed variations of the standard language rules in the journalistic style.
- Structure quality journalistic texts in different genres.

- Structure a text written in administrative style (request, cv, invitation to a meeting, etc.)

### Year 3 Language in the Media (3555)

#### LOs:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Define the rules for language usage in the particular medium/genre.
- Identify inappropriate language usage concerning particular medium/genre.
- Identify inappropriate usage concerning standard language and functional style.
- Adapt the language usage to the requirements of different media, newspapers/magazines, newspaper sections or broadcasts.
- Implement the acquired knowledge in different examples.

Analysis of two-year specialist graduate professional study programme Business Communication Management: In general, the programme is well organized and covers all important topics. Regarding learning outcomes at the level of the study programme, the analysis shows that the majority of learning outcomes are not at the desired level of learning outcomes prescribed for specialist graduate study programmes by the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (CroQF). For example, out of 19 learning outcomes, 5 use the descriptor “to describe”, 2 use “to list”, two use “to identify”, one uses “to differentiate”, one “to explain”, and one “to give”, all of which encompass level 4 descriptors. They also use descriptors such as “to define” and “to understand” which are clearly listed as examples of descriptors which are not recommended to use since they are unmeasurable. As a conclusion, this analysis shows that, while writing learning outcomes at the level of the study programme, guidelines for learning outcomes were not consulted. Secondly, the quality of the procedures for the evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes is questionable despite the fact that the expert panel was reassured repeatedly (in meetings with teachers, heads of departments and the vice dean) that such evaluation and monitoring was in place and was regulated and implemented. Regarding the learning outcomes at the course level, the analysis shows that out of 94 learning outcomes from 15 course syllabi, 57 are descriptors which relate to level 4.

Analysis of two-year specialist graduate professional study programme IT Management: The programme is well structured and covers all relevant topics from the field. Regarding learning outcomes at the level of the study programme, the analysis shows that 7 out of 15 learning outcomes are not at the desired level of learning outcomes prescribed for specialist graduate study programmes by CroQF, i.e. 4 are unmeasurable and 3 are at level 4. Regarding the learning outcomes at the course level, the analysis shows that out of 118 learning outcomes from 17 course syllabi, 52 are descriptors related to level 4.

Analysis of three-year undergraduate professional study programme Business Informatics: The programme is logically structured and covers all important topics. Regarding learning outcomes at the level of the study programme, the analysis shows that

9 out of 16 learning outcomes are not at the desired level of learning outcomes prescribed for undergraduate study programmes by CroQF, i.e. 2 are unmeasurable and 7 are at level 4. Regarding the learning outcomes at course level, the analysis shows that out of 266 learning outcomes from 31 course syllabi, 173 are descriptors related to level 4.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

The main weakness of this standard are learning outcomes that are defined at a basic level and that do not match the level of the study programmes for which they are defined. The expert panel recommends to follow the standard methodology of defining LOs: first at programme level, taking into account the CroQF criteria as well as Bloom's taxonomy and then, to go to each course and adopt its LOs in a way that reflects the CroQF level and progression between individual years of study with the aim of developing students' analytical skills and critical thinking. It is also important to differentiate undergraduate and graduate programmes in terms of objectives (knowledge, skills and competences that are developed through the programme) that are reflected in LOs.

Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.**

The expert panel found that the overview of individual courses and their learning outcomes provided in the documentation gives a structured picture about the desired competencies. However, the expert panel has some concerns about the adequate level of the actual outcomes. As mentioned at other sections of this report, improvements can be made in the description of the learning outcomes, Bloom's taxonomy should be applied properly and all levels should be used. One example in this respect:

Technical Management (TM) - although the learning outcomes on the programme level work with appropriate verbs, the LOs on course level are not aligned with them, i.e. LO TM10 uses verbs such as "identify", "analyse" and "solve", but LOs of courses that cover the LO TM10 use verbs such as "differentiate", "choose" or "explain" which are not in line with Bloom's taxonomy and appropriate for CroQF Level 6.

Overall, the expert panel found that assessments for individual courses are clearly described in the course syllabi and are aligned with learning outcomes. However, the expert panel would like to encourage VERN' to think about some improvements to the modes of assessment. One of the panel's concerns is the heavy use of written exams in cases when assessments that are more fit for purpose are available. For example, a change to assessment modes on courses like "Project Management" could be considered.

On the Journalism study programme there are a number of courses that focus on practical skills and competences and use written exams as assessment modes. While exams can be a fully justified mode of assessment, it would be desirable to consider their weighting and appropriateness in more detail. One example in this respect is the Year 1 course Reporting skills. The course has six learning outcomes:

1. Students gain competences for independent data gathering at events.
2. Evaluate newsworthiness.
3. Demonstrate independent news writing about an event while applying various writing techniques and writing other journalistic forms.
4. Demonstrate the ability to assess an event and decide how to report on it.
5. Demonstrate understanding of journalistic types of communication.
6. Demonstrate basics of presenting an event to the media public.

These are assessed in 3 ways - 2 written exams (each worth 20%) and 6 assignments (worth a total of 60%). It, however, seems that for the large majority of LOs written exams are not a suitable mode of assessment.

From the final thesis on undergraduate and graduate level the expert panel could conclude that students are capable of finishing the programme and fulfill all obligations at a certain level. However, in some cases the complexity of final theses, especially at graduate level could be improved. The procedures for writing and defending the final theses are clearly defined and transparent to all student and professors.

#### Recommendations for improvement

As also suggested in other sections of this report, the expert panel recommends improvements to learning outcomes at course and study programme levels, particular care needs to be taken to define LOs at appropriate level and to use Bloom's taxonomy correctly. It is essential that course LOs, teaching methods and assessment modes are all aligned and well structured in order to contribute to the fulfillment of the defined learning outcomes.

The expert panel also encourages VERN' to revisit assessment modes, consider their appropriateness and weighting in light of learning outcomes in particular. The expert panel has found that attendance - and sometimes additionally activity in class - often contributes to the overall grade and that at 10 or 20%. We encourage VERN' to remove attendance as a form of assessment and to consider the frequency and appropriateness of grading participation in order to ensure solid pedagogic practice.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.**

The expert panel has been provided ample evidence in the self-evaluation report, supplementary materials and during the site visit that confirms VERN's commitment to the involvement of various stakeholders - above all representatives of the businesses/industries - in the planning and development of new study programmes, the most recent example of this is the newly planned study programme in Cyber communication that benefited from inputs particularly from NOKIA. The institution revises its development plans above all in close relation to the needs of the labour market. Information about study programmes is made publicly available and it has been up-to-date. Revisions to study programmes are discussed with stakeholders in business (one example provided related to PR and Tourism management - but this process is not finished yet).

### **Recommendations for improvement**

There is space for improvement in the institutional approach to recommended revisions and improvements. For example, VERN' could be more responsive, timely and efficient in relation to recommendations from the 2011 re-accreditation and ASHE recommendations from November 2018 for the tourism study programme.

### **Quality grade**

High level of quality

## **2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.**

During the site visit the expert panel was provided with additional information and an opportunity to talk to a variety of VERN' employees - most importantly the recently retired and current vice deans - about the allocation of ECTS credits. While the panel acknowledges that the institution has conducted analyses to ensure that the allocation of ECTS credits at study programme level is adequate in terms of workload, these appear to be exclusively student-centred. It would be desirable to analyze inputs from other stakeholders in the teaching process, above all teachers. The expert panel found some significant areas for improvement in the allocation of ECTS credits within individual courses, the spread of ECTS credits does not necessarily reflect the workload associated with various learning outcomes and assessments. Practices at VERN' seem to differ significantly as the expert panel identified some courses with no issues but others with multiple ones. In some cases when ECTS credits are allocated for attendance, attendance is also weighed as part of an assessment, as already mentioned this does not constitute

good pedagogic practice. In addition, in some cases not all the workload in the credits is allocated to an assessment. For example, on the Film, television and multimedia programme of study, the 1st-year course Design and media is allocated a total of 5 credits, of these 1 is allocated to class attendance (i.e. 20% of the workload), 0.5 (i.e. 10% of the workload) to student participation, 1.5 (i.e. 30% of the workload) to project, 1 (i.e. 20% of the workload) to oral exam and 1 (i.e. 20% of the workload) to practicals. In comparison, the weighting of assessments is as follows: 40% of the total grade is allocated to student participation, 30% to practicals, 30% to two exams (each exam is weighted at 15%) and nothing is explicitly allocated to the project. The expert panel found a very good ratio of ECTS credits allocated for practical teaching, in line with expectations for a polytechnic.

#### Recommendations for improvement

There is a need to revise and appropriately allocate ECTS credits for core and other courses based on solid pedagogic reasoning. There is also a need to check and revise the allocation of ECTS credits on some courses to correctly reflect the allocation of workload for particular tasks/learning processes. The process of monitoring and revising of ECTS credits at the study programme level should be conducted on a regular basis.

Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **2.6. Student practice is an integral part of the study programmes.**

The expert panel found ample evidence that confirms VERN's commitment to make student practice an integral part of all of its study programmes. Student work experience opportunities are organized outside the educational institutions and with nationally leading industry players - such as DoubleTree Hilton, Coca Cola, Nokia. Support for student practice is provided by a dedicated internship officer and the extensive network of alumni plays a key role in achieving the objectives of student practice. Learning outcomes are matched to the assessment that takes the form of a reflective/evaluative piece of writing completed upon the conclusion of student practice.

#### Recommendations for improvement

While the panel was impressed with the support and organization of student practice opportunities and its monitoring overall, we would recommend to consider improvements for the way practice is organized for part-time students.

Quality grade

High level of quality

### **III. Teaching process and student support**

#### **3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.**

The criteria for admission or continuation of studies are published online and consistently applied during the process of admission. During the visit to VERN', the expert panel was shown admission criteria and examples of VERN's specially designed entrance exam. The analysis conducted by VERN' shows that student performance is related to the results of the entrance exam which proves that VERN' ensures the selection of candidates with appropriate prior knowledge. The entrance exam is compulsory for applicants without the state matura exam but VERN' encourages all applicants to take the entrance exam because it is a requirement for a VERN' scholarship. It is evident that VERN' effectively recognising prior learning, what was confirmed in positive feedback by students and alumni who have transferred from other institutions. This was further evidenced in interviews with representatives of the student office.

##### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel was very impressed with the entrance exam that VERN' developed and recommends to make it compulsory for all applicants.

##### **Quality grade**

High level of quality

#### **3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.**

VERN' collects and monitors data on student's progress, pass rates and on completion rates. Information on these processes is set out in the Ordinance. The expert panel found ample evidence in the self-evaluation report, supplementary materials and the interviews conducted during the site visit about VERN's mechanisms for analysis. As part of the effort to boost student retention, VERN' uses reductions in tuition fees as an incentive to encourage students to improve their results.

##### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel encourages VERN' to continue the work on student retention.

##### **Quality grade**

High level of quality

### **3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.**

In the course of the site visit the expert panel had opportunities to join teaching sessions at a variety of study programmes and to inspect the facilities at VERN. The expert panel was satisfied that VERN' teachers - and the institution overall - use a variety of teaching methods, delivery styles etc. to achieve the learning outcomes of individual courses and study programmes. The teaching that the expert panel witnessed was interactive and engaging and in the meetings with teachers and students this was further confirmed. The expert panel also received evidence about adjustments made particularly for part-time students. VERN' evaluates teaching on a regular basis and uses student feedback extensively. The technologies used are state-of-the art, the expert panel saw the studio, the incubator lab and other facilities. The expert panel also had a chance to talk to technicians about the types of equipment and the regular updating of it and all of this was very impressive. The expert panel was impressed with the dedication and engagement that VERN' teachers demonstrated, evidence of this has come up in interviews with current students as well as alumni and also in examples provided by teachers and technicians. The teachers seem to be available at all times and in some cases the expert panel was concerned that student-centred learning has been replaced by student-led one, with students becoming clients whose wishes need to be taken seriously at all times. This can have a detrimental impact on students' autonomy and independent learning.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel believes that it is very important for VERN' to calibrate the distinction between student-centred and student-led teaching more carefully. The expert panel strongly recommends the introduction of measures that will increase students' independent learning. It is important that this is not merely a numerical value, i.e. certain numbers of hours are allocated to it but that students develop habits that will make them independent learners and practitioners. The expert panel also strongly encourages VERN' to adopt a more judicious approach to the use of student feedback and the implementation of suggestions for change made in such feedback. The expert panel is highly supportive of processes that make the students' voices heard but wants to express a concern about - possibly unintended - undue pressure on teachers that an over-reliance on student feedback in management decisions is most likely to result in. VERN's learning environment is highly supportive and efficient and it is important that all stakeholders feel supported and have their voices heard.

#### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality



### **3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.**

The panel recognizes student support as a particular strength of VERN'. The institution has developed a series of support mechanisms, including counselling for study, a student representative for each cohort, personal development support and advising on individual basis is also available. The expert panel heard ample evidence and examples from current students and alumni about their experience of receiving outstanding support from teachers as well as librarians and technicians. The panel also heard about examples of support provided to students with special needs. Teachers also provided a plenitude of examples of support that they provide to the students. VERN' employs an adequate number of qualified and committed professional, administrative and technical staff, the institution has developed its own software for student record keeping.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel encourages VERN' to be more distinctive when it comes to ensuring that the extensive student support on a one-to-one basis does not interfere with teachers' work/life balance.

#### **Quality grade**

High level of quality

### **3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.**

VERN' has implemented ways of monitoring and supporting vulnerable students and according to information from current and past students as well as teachers these are functioning well. Apart from fulfilling requirements about accessibility, VERN' also provided examples of more challenging situations in which they supported students, including waving the tuition fees in the case of an orphan. VERN' also makes adjustments to fee payments in cases when students go through financially difficult periods, this is done on an individual basis.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel would like to suggest that VERN' set up a dedicated scholarship for applicants from under-privileged backgrounds. This would be a formal recognition of a practice that at the moment occurs on an ad-hoc basis.

#### **Quality grade**

High level of quality

### **3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.**

The expert panel has seen evidence of growing numbers of students who use the opportunity to study abroad or to complete their work experience abroad. VERN' has a dedicated Erasmus co-ordinator (who is in the same time the head of International office) who has provided exhaustive answers to the expert panel members' questions during the site visit. There is a solid process in place for the recognition of ECTS credits and VERN' collects feedback from students who have completed a period of international mobility.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

While the expert panel acknowledges the progress that VERN' has made in this area and the objectively existing challenges - including financial ones - we would encourage further work on motivating students and considering various forms of incentives (including financial ones) for using Erasmus mobility possibilities to go abroad and strengthen their international network, language capabilities, benchmark possibilities etc.

Quality grade

High level of quality

### **3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.**

Internationalization is a key part of VERN's strategic plan and the institution has conducted significant amounts of work in setting up teaching in the English language. Apart from opportunities for Erasmus students, VERN also launched two degree programmes that are delivered in English only. These are promoted on the English language website <https://www.vernuni.eu> and there is extensive information about them available. The expert panel learnt that VERN' collects oral feedback from foreign students, this is mainly due to their small numbers.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

Since the number of international students is increasing it would be impossible to collect oral feedback and maintain relationships with them informally. The expert panel recommends to collect feedback in a more formalized way and to use it in the promotion of the English-language study programmes and Erasmus.

Quality grade

High level of quality

### **3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.**

The expert panel received the syllabi for all courses in both Croatian and English and while courses had a clear set of assessment criteria and grading scales, the panel found examples of courses where teaching methods were identified wrongly (for example, some modules list exams under the rubric of teaching methods and contact hours, see e.g. Theory of film, course ID 6989 or Croatian language and culture, course ID 3550\_1). The expert panel also considered the range and appropriateness of assessment modes on individual courses and arrived at the conclusion that improvements can be made in this respect. For example, on the Journalism study programme written exams are used very frequently, in the first year of studies every course comprises a written exam and often the weighting for written exams is over 50% overall. While there are solid pedagogic reasons for using written exams as a mode of assessment, an extensive reliance on these can be inadequate particularly on courses that focus on practical skills and their development. Since the number of students on many study programmes is not excessively high, other modes of assessments could be applied easily and reflect more on the knowledge, skills and competences achieved by students. VERN' regularly runs training sessions for teachers and these include grading and the design of assessments. As part of its quality assurance process VERN' monitors students' achievements and the consistency of grades but more work could be carried out on the evaluation of grading to ensure consistency within entire study programmes. The expert panel was provided with examples of graded student work and feedback during the course of its site visit and found these appropriate.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The expert panel recommends that more work is carried out on the alignment of learning outcomes with assessments and that where needed corrections are made to the modes of assessment and the teaching methods. The expert panel also recommends the conduct of meta analyses which will help ensure consistency of grading within entire study programmes.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.**

Upon the completion of their studies, students are issued appropriate documents (diploma and Diploma Supplement). The higher education institution issues the Diploma Supplement in Croatian and English, free of charge.

Recommendations for improvement  
None

Quality grade  
High level of quality

### **3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.**

VERN's alignment - in all aspects of its mission and strategic plan - with the needs of the labour market is one of its major strengths. The institution carries out a lot of work around monitoring the needs of the labour markets, work placements that occasionally lead to employment, the development of skills necessary for the workplace. The expert panel heard a number of testimonies from stakeholders in the business community who employ VERN' students as part of their work experience programme. All of them spoke very highly of VERN' students and their practical and transferable skills, including in comparison with other institutions from which they employed students. VERN' has recently introduced a new project specifically focused on employability called Build Your Career, at the moment it is available to a limited number of students. VERN' has been successfully running an alumni association - Alumni Club - and its importance has been emphasised at a number of meetings that the expert panel had during the site visit.

Recommendations for improvement  
The expert panel would like to suggest that the Build Your Career project is rolled out across the whole institution and that VERN' continues to build on the success of its EducationMeetsBusiness initiative.

Quality grade  
High level of quality

## **IV. Teaching and institutional capacities**

### **4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.**

There are sufficient numbers of lecturers employed at VERN' and this applies to each level of the study programmes and the majority of them are appointed in appropriate fields.

The ratio of students and full-time teachers at VERN' is satisfactory and it ensures good quality of study.

Teachers' workload is in line with relevant legislation and policies and it allows enough time for professional and/or scientific activities, however, the expert panel found very little evidence that such activities are carried out at a level and with the intensity that is to be expected of an institution like VERN'. There has been a noticeable drop in the numbers of publications since the self-evaluation report that VERN' submitted in 2010. If we compare the total numbers of publications in the two reports - which is arguably a crude measure - we can see that the total in the 2010 report is 399 as opposed to 231 in the current report. According to the 2010 report in the previous 5 years VERN' teachers published 57 professional papers, compared with 13 listed in the current report. The 2010 report refers to 61 domestic book authorships, compared with none in the current report. The number of peer-reviewed publications from scientific and professional events/conferences/in proceedings of scientific and professional events/conferences has dropped from 106 in the 2010 report to 99 in the current one.

Below we provide a more detailed analysis for individual study programmes.

#### Analysis of tourism study programmes:

Tourism as an interdisciplinary field requires qualifications from different fields. The qualifications of the lecturers have a wide range and cover all necessary competences. The ratio of students and lecturers ensures a high quality of study.

The focus of lecturers' work is teaching and their scientific activities are infrequent. The number of publications – regardless of the type of publication – per lecturer within the last 5 years is 0.35. The difference between the undergraduate and the graduate programmes in Tourism and Entrepreneurship is also notable - the activities in the undergraduate programmes are higher than in the graduate programmes.

		% of lecturers publishing	Average papers per lecturer in 5 years
Undergraduate Programmes	Tourism	43%	1.5
	Entrepreneurship Economics	52%	2.0

Graduate Programmes	Sustainable Tourism Management	21%	1.4
	Entrepreneurship Management	20%	1.5

#### Analysis of Technical Management:

Technical Management is an interdisciplinary study programme which requires lecturers appointed into areas of technical and social sciences. Although the lecturers are mostly qualified, the courses in the field of civil engineering are held by a lecturer appointed in the field of fundamental technical sciences. The lecturers appointed in the fields of social sciences like economics or psychology are involved in some professional and scientific activities, but they are still not significant. However, the biggest issue is that none of the lecturers appointed in the fields of technical sciences have published a single paper in the last 5 years.

#### Analysis of two-year specialist graduate professional study programme Business Communication Management:

In the last 5 years, 22 teachers employed on this study programme published 51 articles. All of these articles were written by 7 teachers which means that 15 teachers did not publish a single article. Out of these 15, 4 teachers are employed full time. Beside the low levels of research and publication activities, it seems that lecturers have necessary qualifications to teach the courses.

#### Analysis of two-year specialist graduate professional study programme IT Management:

In the last 5 years, 22 teachers employed on this study programme published 22 articles. Out of these 22, 18 articles were written by 3 teachers. 16 teachers did not publish a single article. Of these 16 teachers, 4 are employed full time.

#### Analysis of three-year undergraduate professional study programme Business Informatics:

In the last 5 years, 22 teachers employed on this study programme published 39 articles. All of these articles were written by 9 teachers which means that 13 teachers did not publish a single article. Of these 13 teachers, 6 are full-time employees.

It is very difficult to confirm that lecturers at graduate specialist programme in Human Resource Management are sufficiently qualified since the names of the lecturers are not provided in the syllabi of the programme and each course of the programme. In the Analytical appendix to Self Evaluation there is a list of lecturers on this graduate

programme available, but there is no indication of the courses that they teach on. Since the programme went through the initial accreditation recently, it is expected that all lecturers are qualified and appointed in the appropriate fields. The research and professional activity of the lecturers is quite low, only some of them publish regularly.

Graduate specialist programme in Accounting and Finance is in a very similar situation to the above mentioned programmes. Lecturers are qualified to teach the courses but their scientific or professional activity is very low. This activity is very important for maintaining the accuracy of the subject and the whole course. We are aware that the programme is a specialist graduate programme and the focus is on practical knowledge and skills but to safeguard a certain level of quality and to select relevant content - and ultimately to have employable graduates - professional activity should be a natural and obligatory part of each lecturer's job, especially at graduate level. Some part-time lecturer that are listed in the provided documents are not listed in course descriptions (e.g. Boris Vujcic, Dubravko Radosevic) and this should be corrected.

There are 27 teachers employed on the Journalism undergraduate study programme, of these 14 are on a part-time temporary contract and 13 are employed on full-time permanent contracts. The nature of the study programme justifies this ratio as practitioners or lecturer with specialist knowledge (such as law) are not necessarily employed full-time. However, five of the 13 full-time permanent members of staff on this programme have not had a single publication in the past 5 years.

The Film, TV and Multimedia Design undergraduate study programme has a large number of part-time teachers on temporary contracts (8 out of 14) which can be justified by the nature of the study programme and the need for significant output from practitioners in the relevant fields. Of the six employed full-time on permanent contracts, two have not published at all in the past 5 years. It is likely that the practitioners employed on part-time temporary contracts have produced some relevant (artistic) work but the report does not mention this in the tables or in the narrative.

#### Recommendations for improvement

While the expert panel found that there are sufficient numbers of lecturers employed and that in appropriate fields and also that student/staff ratio ensures the good quality of study, we have serious concerns about the quality and amount of professional and/or scientific activities. The expert panel believes that improving the quality and quantity of professional/scientific publications is essential if VERN' is to ensure the quality of its study programmes and - in the end - the employability of its graduates. The expert panel recommends that VERN' considers the introduction of internal criteria for the promotion of lecturers, demanding a certain number of publications in scientific or/and professional

journals as this could be an efficient way of improving this activity. The expert panel members believe that each lecturer should publish at least one paper each year, especially lecturers employed to teach at graduate level.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

#### **4.2. The higher education institution ensures appropriate quality of external associates.**

VERN' employs a large number of external associates (a total of 192) in various types of teaching roles, including supervision. This is closely in line with the institution's mission and its focus on the preparation of students for employment in specific businesses/industries. The external associates are representatives tend to be actively working in the fields of business, media, PR, tourism etc. and bring considerable experience and knowledge into the teaching process. In the course of the site visit the expert panel met some of the external associates and received further evidence of their close involvement in teaching and also in students' work experience. From the interviews with external associates it appeared to be a standard practice to enable VERN' student to undertake work experience in their organizations.

Recommendations for improvement

None

Quality grade

High level of quality

#### **4.3. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures which include the evaluation of excellence.**

VERN' has described its recruitment strategy in the self-evaluation report and the expert panel was provided further insights during the site visit. The expert panel found that VERN's recruitment strategy is closely aligned with the institution's strategic plans and has been thought through in relation to the institution's plans for expansion of its study programmes and most recently its aim to establish VERN' University. VERN' has relied on close co-operation with external associates as teachers in the long term and this approach provides the institution with a strong pool for the selection of its teaching staff. VERN' advertises teaching positions on a variety of platforms (the expert panel was provided data about the amount of applications received in the last recruitment round),



evaluates CVs of applicants and runs an interview process. As mentioned in other sections of the report VERN' has a well developed system for student feedback and such feedback plays a role in the advancement of teachers (to the extent that a lack of improvement in teaching after two rounds of unsatisfactory student feedback can lead to termination of contract). VERN' follows the requirements of the Croatian legal framework when appointing to teaching grades. While the expert panel appreciates the importance of external associates and assistants, concerns have been raised about the speed (actually lack of it) of progression for employees in these roles. The expert panel found gaps in the incorporation of indicators of excellence in professional and teaching activities in the promotion criteria.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel strongly encourages VERN' to develop additional internal criteria for the promotion of teachers to ensure that indicators of quality of professional/scientific and teaching activities form a clear part of career advancement. One example that the expert panel discussed was to introduce a rule that a teacher cannot be re-elected more than once unless they fulfil indicators of excellence.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **4.4. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.**

VERN' has developed a training programme on teaching competencies which is tailored for the needs of teachers at various stages in their careers. For those with little experience VERN' has a 50-hour course in place and this is supplemented with shorter training on specific areas such as learning outcomes or assessments. VERN' has a system of peer review observations in place and co-teaching/co-mentoring as part of extended the skills of its teachers. Teachers have opportunities to engage in mobility programmes, projects and professional networks.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends that all staff - and especially assistants - should get teachers' training before they start teaching, this can be a shorter training course.

#### Quality grade

High level of quality

**4.5. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities etc.) are adequate for the delivery of the study programmes and ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and the implementation of professional and/or scientific activity.**

The expert panel was provided various types of evidence (resources expenditure, tour of facilities, interviews with management and technicians etc.) that confirm that VERN' pays close attention to the resourcing for its study programmes and these resources are not only appropriate for the achievement of learning outcomes but are also of high quality, The resourcing is in line with VERN's strategic plans and mission and the expert panel has also seen examples of innovative use of resources such as the incubator lab.

Recommendations for improvement

None

Quality grade

High level of quality

**4.6. The library and library equipment, as well as access to additional resources ensure the literature necessary for ensuring high-quality of study and scientific and teaching activity.**

The expert panel acknowledges that VERN' has increased its expenditure on the library and library resources and that students and teachers expressed satisfaction with these resources in the course of interviews that were part of the site visit. However, the expert panel has some concerns about the dated nature of the literature that forms essential reading and is available in the library. This applies to some literature that supports professional activities as well.

Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends the acquisition of most up-to-date literature and its linking to learning outcomes.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

**4.7. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources**

The expert panel was satisfied that VERN's financial sustainability is a key concern for the institution's management and that financial resources are used efficiently and are

allocated appropriately. VERN' has introduced new study programmes in the recent past and is about to launch more of these and the expert panel understands that the financial viability of these has been explored and ensured by the institution. VERN' has participated in externally funded projects, including international ones (in terms of mobility Erasmus+ plays an important role).

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel noted the discrepancy between the significant financial investment in in spaces/resources and the financial investment in staff's professional development and mobility.

Quality grade

High level of quality

### **V. Professional and/or scientific activity**

#### **5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of professional and/or scientific research.**

As already noted in Section 4 the expert panel found very little evidence that would confirm that VERN' employee achieve the desired quality and quantity of scientific or professional outputs as required of an institution of this type.

Publications in scientific/professional journals are lacking in all areas of teaching, please see section 4.1 for a detailed analysis. According to data in the analytic supplement to the self-evaluation report, a number of full-time permanent staff employed across all study programmes have not published at all in the past 5 years.

The expert panel found that the number of publications compared to data made available by VERN' in a 2010 self-evaluation report has dropped significantly, from a total of 399 to 231.

#### Recommendations for improvement

As mentioned in section 4 the expert panel recommends the introduction of a formal policy that would guide growth in this area. VERN' has an ad hoc arrangement in place to support staff attending conferences but, for example, a set of internal criteria for promotion could be introduced to encourage the publication of scientific/professional outputs, attendance at conferences etc. A system of financial and other rewards could also be considered.

Quality grade  
Minimum level of quality

## **5.2. The higher education institution proves the social relevance of its professional and/or scientific research and transfer of knowledge.**

VERN's focus on the needs of the labour market has been noted in various sections of this report and the expert panel acknowledges the institution's successes in this respect. In contrast, VERN' should do more work on developing its understanding of broader social needs and the needs of local communities and on gearing its professional/scientific and research activities in this direction as well. The expert panel was provided with examples of VERN's engagement with local communities (e.g. a project with the municipality of Vis) and contemporary issues that impact on society (for example the conference on women in business) but an institution of VERN's calibre and with strategic plans that focus on internationalization and expansion of its provision is expected to be more active in making its professional/scientific research socially relevant and in encouraging knowledge transfer. The expert panel noted that while VERN' actively sought knowledge exchange with stakeholders from businesses and industries that it prepares students for, this exchange appears to be one-directional with stakeholders influencing VERN's teaching and professional activities as well as long-term strategic plans (e.g. the Cyber communication degree that is to be launched appears to have been initiated by a representative of Nokia). The expert panel believes that knowledge exchange is essential in both directions, i.e. VERN' should also be able to provide industries and businesses with knowledge that will help them achieve their goals. Such knowledge - for example research on trends in the industry, on users of businesses etc. - needs to be underpinned by scientific and professional research, an area that VERN' can develop in substantial ways.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

While the expert panel acknowledges VERN's success in recognizing the needs of the Croatian labour market, it recommends that VERN' develops its activities that relate to broader social needs in more depth.

The expert panel also encourages VERN' to develop knowledge exchange in both directions, i.e. to increase the flow of knowledge generated by VERN' to businesses and industries. In order to achieve this, VERN' needs to support its staff's scientific and professional research. A clear benefit of this will be a more in-depth understanding of trends and developments in society and in industries and business that will enable a more pro-active approach to strategic planning.

The expert panel recommends the establishment of a research group and a regular series of research events, we believe that this will be particularly beneficial for graduate students and will also enhance VERN's reputation.

Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **5.3. Professional and/or scientific achievements of the higher education institution have been recognized in the regional, national and international context.**

While the expert panel understands the legal requirements as to the types of research that VERN' is obliged to undertake, examples of VERN' teachers' professional/scientific achievements and their recognition are scarce.

Similarly, the expert panel appreciates the restrictions of the funding system but it finds VERN's engagement in projects as evidenced in the self-evaluation report and supplementary materials inadequate for an institution of VERN's calibre and mission.

While some teachers take part in national and international conferences - and the evidence clearly suggests that a small group of staff are very active in this area - this is an area in which VERN' needs growth.

VERN' co-operates closely with professional associations that are linked to particular industries (PR, tourism etc.), the expert panel, however, noted the lack of engagement with professional associations that are connected to scientific/professional research.

Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends that in order to enable growth in professional/scientific research and its quality, VERN' introduces formal and effective incentives. This can, for example, take the form of a reduced teaching load for those applying for projects or publishing research.

The expert panel also recommends that VERN' encourages its teachers to be members of professional organizations that focus on professional/scientific research, for example an association of researchers on tourism/PR etc.

Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **5.4. Professional and/or scientific activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve teaching.**

While the expert panel acknowledges that VERN' has developed ways in which professional/scientific activities are incorporated into teaching, there is space for growth

in this area. This point relates closely to 5.1 and 5.3 as the first steps in increasing the transfer of scientific/professional research into teaching, is to increase the volume of quality of such research. The expert panel is particularly keen to see VERN' teachers' professional/scientific research informing undergraduate students' final pieces of work and the teaching at graduate level. While the expert panel heard about an example of an international project on entrepreneurship being incorporated into teaching, we believe that more initiatives like this are needed. As mentioned in the previous point (5.3) the expert panel encourages VERN' to develop incentives to encourage professional/scientific research and in a similar way the expert panel can see a gap in an effective system for the recognition and rewarding of achievements in professional/scientific research.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The expert panel recommends that VERN' develops more formal and effective ways of recognizing and rewarding professional/scientific achievements.

The expert panel also recommends that VERN' encourages its teachers to increase the connection between their professional/scientific research and their teaching and that they involve students, particularly at graduate level, in professional research projects a spart of their learning.

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **APPENDICES**

### **1. Quality assessment summary - tables**

<i>Quality grade by assessment area</i>				
<i>Assessment area</i>	Unsatisfactory level of quality	Minimum level of quality	Satisfactory level of quality	High level of quality
<i>I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>			<b>X</b>	
<i>II. Study programmes</i>			<b>X</b>	
<i>III. Teaching process and student support</i>				<b>X</b>
<i>IV. Teaching and institutional capacities</i>				<b>X</b>
<i>V. Professional and/or scientific activity</i>		<b>X</b>		



<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.			X	
1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.		X		
1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.				X
1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, professional and/or scientific and social role).			X	
1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.			X	
1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.			X	

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>II. Study programmes</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the demands of the labour market.				X
2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.		X		
2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.			X	
2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.				X
2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.		X		
2.6. Student practice is an integral part of the study programmes.				X

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>III. Teaching process and student support</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.				X
3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.				X
3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.			X	
3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.				X
3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.				X
3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.				X
3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.				X
3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.			X	
3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.				X
3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.				X

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>IV. Teaching and institutional capacities</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.			X	
4.2. The higher education institution ensures appropriate quality of external associates.				X
4.3. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures, which include the evaluation of excellence			X	
4.4. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.				X
4.5. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities etc.) are adequate for the delivery of the study programmes and ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and the implementation of professional and/or scientific activity.				X
4.6. The library and library equipment, as well as access to additional resources ensure the literature necessary for ensuring high-quality of study and scientific and teaching activity.			X	
4.7. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources.				X

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>V. Professional and/or scientific activity</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of professional and/or scientific research.		X		
5.2. The higher education institution proves the social relevance of its professional and/or scientific research and transfer of knowledge.		X		
5.3. Professional and/or scientific achievements of the higher education institution have been recognized in the regional, national and international context.		X		
5.4. Professional and/or scientific activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve teaching.		X		

## 2. Site visit protocol

**Reakreditacija  
Veleučilište VERN'**

**Re-accreditation of the  
VERN' Polytechnic**

### ***Edukacija Stručnog povjerenstva***

### ***Training of Panel members***

*Mjesto događanja:*

**Agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanje**

*Venue:*

**Agency for Science and Higher Education**

*Donje Svetice 38/V  
10 000 Zagreb*

	<b>Ponedjeljak, 08. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Monday, 08<sup>th</sup> April 2019</b>
<b>9:00 – 10:30</b>	Edukacija članova Stručnog povjerenstva (kratko predstavljanje rada Agencije, upoznavanje sa sustavom visokog obrazovanja u Hrvatskoj, upoznavanje s Postupkom reakreditacije, Standardima za vrednovanje kvalitete i načinom pisanja završnog izvješća)	Training for the expert panel members (short presentation of ASHE, introduction to the higher education system in Croatia, introduction to the re-accreditation procedure, standards for the evaluation of quality and writing the final report)
<b>10:30 – 10:45</b>	<i>Pauza za kavu</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
<b>10:45 – 13:15</b>	Priprema Stručnog povjerenstva za posjet Veleučilištu VERN'i (rad na Samoanalizi) Pitanja za posjet	Preparation of the expert panel members for the site visit (working on the Self-evaluation) Questions for the site visit
<b>13:15 – 14:00</b>	<i>Ručak</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
<b>14:00 – 16:00</b>	Priprema Stručnog povjerenstva za posjet (rad na Samoanalizi) Pitanja za posjet	Preparation of the expert panel members for the site visit (working on the Self-evaluation) Questions for the site visit

**PROTOKOL POSJETA**

*Mjesto događanja: Veleučilište VERN'*

**VISIT PROTOCOL**

*Venue: VERN' Polytechnic*

*Iblerov trg 10, Zagreb*

	Utorak, 09. travnja 2019	Tuesday, 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2019
<b>09:00 – 10:00</b>	Sastanak s upravom visokog učilišta (predsjednik uprave, direktor, dekan, prodekani i tajnik) (bez prezentacije)	Meeting with the management (Board Chairman, Director, Dean, Vice- deans and Secretary) (no presentations)
<b>10:00 – 11:30</b>	<i>Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva (<b>analiza dokumenata</b>)</i>	<i>Internal meeting of the panel members (<b>Document analysis</b>)</i>
<b>11:30 – 12:15</b>	Sastanak s voditeljima studijskih programa	Meeting with the heads of the Study programmes
<b>12:15 – 13:15</b>	Sastanak s nastavnicima u stalnom radnom odnosu, nisu na rukovodećim mjestima (otvoreni sastanak)	Meeting with full-time employed teachers who do not have managerial positions (open meeting)
<b>13:15 – 14:30</b>	<i>Radni ručak Stručnog povjerenstva</i>	<i>Working lunch</i>
<b>14:30 – 15:15</b>	Sastanak sa studentima (otvoreni sastanak za sve studente)	Meeting with the students (open meeting for all students)
<b>15:15 – 16:00</b>	Sastanak s vanjskim predavačima	Meeting with external lecturers
<b>16:00 – 16:45</b>	Sastanak s vanjskim dionicima - predstavnicima strukovnih i profesionalnih udruženja, poslovna zajednica, poslodavci, stručnjaci iz prakse	Meeting with external stakeholders - representatives of professional organisations, business sector/industry sector, employers, professional experts
<b>16:45 – 17:45</b>	<i>Interni sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva refleksija o viđenom</i>	<i>Joint meeting of the expert panel members – reflection on the day</i>
<b>17:45 – 18:15</b>	Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o otvorenim pitanjima ( <b>prema potrebi</b> )	Organisation of additional meeting on open questions ( <b>if needed</b> )

**PROTOKOL POSJETA**

*Mjesto događanja: Veleučilište VERN'*

**VISIT PROTOCOL**

*Venue: VERN' Polytechnic*

*Iblerov trg 10, Zagreb*

	<b>Srijeda, 10. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019.</b>
<b>9:00 – 10:00</b>	<i>Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva (<b>Analiza dokumenata</b>)</i>	<i>Internal meeting of the panel members (<b>Document analysis</b>)</i>
<b>10:00 – 11:30</b>	Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva s: – Predstavnicima Ureda za osiguravanje kvalitete – Voditeljem ureda za međunarodnu suradnju – Voditeljem ureda za cjeloživotno obrazovanje – Voditeljem ureda za projekte – Erasmus koordinatorom – Voditeljem prakse – Voditelj VERN' akademije	Meeting with: – Representatives of the Committee for Quality – Head of the International cooperation Office – Head of the Life Long Learning Office – Head of projects Office – Erasmus Coordinator – Head of internship – Head of VERN' Academy
<b>11:30 – 12:15</b>	Sastanak s alumnijima (koji nisu zaposlenici Veleučilišta)	Meeting with the alumni (which are not employees of the HEI)
<b>12:15 – 13:30</b>	<i>Radni ručak Stručnog povjerenstva</i>	<i>Working lunch</i>
<b>13:30 – 15:30</b>	-Obilazak (knjižnica, referada, informatičke učionice, laboratorij, TV studio, inkubator) i -prisustvovanje nastavi	-Tour of the HEI (library, IT services, student office, laboratories, TV studio, incubator) -participation in teaching classes
<b>15:30 – 17:00</b>	Interni sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva	Internal meeting of the panel members
<b>17:00 – 17:30</b>	Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o otvorenim pitanjima, prema potrebi	Organisation of additional meeting on open questions, if needed
<b>17:30– 17:45</b>	Završni sastanak s dekanom i prodekanima	Exit meeting with the dean and vice-deans



**Reakreditacija  
Veleučilište VERN'**

**Re-accreditation of the  
VERN' Polytechnic**

***Rad na završnom izvješću***

***Work on Final Report***

*Mjesto događanja:*  
**Agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanje**

*Venue:*  
**Agency for Science and Higher Education**

*Donje Svetice 38/V  
10 000 Zagreb*

	<b>Četvrtak, 11. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019.</b>
<b>09:00 – 12:30</b>	Sastanak Stručnog povjerenstva – izrada nacрта završnog izvješća i rad na dokumentu Standardi za vrednovanje kvalitete	Joint meeting of the expert panel members – Drafting the final report and working on the document Standards for the evaluation of quality
<b>12:30 – 13:30</b>	<i>Ručak</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
<b>13:30 – 16:00</b>	Sastanak Stručnog povjerenstva – izrada nacрта završnog izvješća i rad na dokumentu Standardi za vrednovanje kvalitete	Joint meeting of the expert panel members – Drafting the final report and working on the document Standards for the evaluation of quality

## SUMMARY

The expert panel has explored quality standards in five areas: Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution; Study programmes; Teaching process and student support; Teaching and institutional capacities; Professional and/or scientific activity. It has found that VERN' fulfills a number of these at satisfactory or high level of quality overall, namely:

1. Two quality standards are fulfilled at satisfactory level overall:

Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution  
Study programmes

2. Two quality standards are fulfilled at high level of quality overall:

Teaching process and student support

Teaching and institutional capacities

The expert panel found that one out of the five quality standards is fulfilled at minimum level of quality overall, namely Professional and/or scientific activity.

The sub-areas in which the expert panel would strongly encourage VERN' to conduct more work to achieve improvements include:

- the implementation of recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.
- the alignment of learning outcomes at the level of study programmes with the level and profile of qualifications gained.
- adequate allocation of ECTS credits.

The expert panel expresses the opinion that it is fundamental that VERN' increases the quality of standard 5 and that involves work on all the sub-areas, namely:

- teachers' and associates' commitment to the achievement of high quality and quantity of professional and/or scientific research.
- proving the social relevance of VERN's professional and/or scientific research and transfer of knowledge.
- recognition of VERN's professional and/or scientific achievements in the regional, national and international context.
- improvements to teaching that are the result of VERN's professional and/or scientific activities and achievements.

The expert panel has found instances of good practice, including:

- the development of an extensive range of training programmes that contribute to staff development and ensure the quality of the teaching provided.
- the development of an impressive student support system.
- the development of different projects (such as Design Your Career) that aim to raising students employability.
- the development of a well-functioning formalized alumni network.

