

**ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY
FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

Institutional Accreditation Report for Estonian Business School

2020

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Introduction

Institutional accreditation

Institutional accreditation is the **process of external evaluation** which assesses the conformity of a university or higher education institution's management, work procedures, study and research activities and environment to both legislation and the goals and development plan of the higher education institution itself. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment panel analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER hereinafter) of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

The goal of institutional accreditation is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture that values learning-centeredness, creativity and innovation in the higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as to increase the societal impact of education, research and development delivered by the HEIs.

HEIs are assessed according to twelve standards of institutional accreditation. Assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management. The learning and teaching process is examined in more detail under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment, and learning support processes). Throughout the assessment process, there is a focus on academic ethics, quality culture and internationalisation.

Educational institutions must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years based on the [regulation](#) approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education.

The institutional accreditation of Estonian Business School (EBS) took place in August 2020. The Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA hereinafter) composed an international review panel, which was approved by the higher education institution. The composition of the panel was thereafter approved by the order of EKKA director.

The following persons formed the review panel:

Martin Jes Iversen (Chairperson)	Vice Dean of International Education, Associate Professor, Copenhagen Business School (Denmark)
Matthew Kitching (Secretary)	Student, Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University (UK)
Maarja Beerkens	Assistant professor, Director of Studies, University of Leiden (The Netherlands)
M. Abdul Rauf	Dr, Head of the School of Business, Wittenborg University (The Netherlands)
Luis Carvalho	Assistant Professor, Director of Master in Innovation Economics and Management, University of Porto (Portugal)
Peeter Võrk	Managing Director, Chairman of the Board, PW Partners (Estonia)

The Institutional Accreditation Report consists of two parts: (1) evaluation of twelve institutional accreditation standards, and (2) a report on quality assessment of a sample of study programmes.

Assessment process

After the preparation phase, the assessment team began their work on Monday, August 17, 2020. EKKA provided an introduction to the Higher Education System and to the assessment procedure. The members of the team agreed on the overall questions and areas to discuss. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed. During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of the Estonian Business School, students, staff, alumni, and employers (August 17–19 inclusive). This was followed by an internal team meeting on Thursday, August 20, in order for the panel to reach their conclusions and prepare drafting of the report. Owing to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic all meetings were held in a hybrid format with some interviewees and panel members attending in person and others online. For the Schedule of the Visit, please see the Appendix of the Report.

In finalising the assessment report, the committee took into consideration comments made by the institution. The committee submitted the final report to EKKA on 16th October 2020.

The assessment process was coordinated by Liia Lauri and Marit Sukk from EKKA.

Information about Estonian Business School

The Estonian Business School is the oldest private business school in the Baltics, founded in 1988. As a free-standing private business school owned by the SA Estonian Business School (a non-profit foundation), the university is financially independent and receives only limited research base financing from the state. As a business school with university standing, EBS offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral-level programmes in the business and administration study programme group. The Estonian Business School was the first university in Estonia to establish a subsidiary in Finland in 2011. The EBS Helsinki Branch began by offering an international business administration bachelor's programme, and since the academic year 2015–16, it also offers a master's programme in international business administration with a specialisation in organisational change and leadership.

EBS has two missions. First, to provide students with the necessary knowledge, contact base, and practical experience to set and reach their career-related, financial, and life goals. Second, to help organisations achieve their goals through human resources engaged in life-long learning and applying the knowledge obtained in EBS. The long-term vision of EBS is to belong to the top-ranked European business schools with an internationally recognised accreditation (EQUIS) and to be an opinion leader in the field of business and management in Estonia. EBS is positively accredited by the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) for its quality of the study programmes on all three levels and holds an institutional accreditation, also by EKKA. Furthermore, the R&D is positively evaluated by the Estonian Research Agency, and the international business administration bachelor's programme has attained the EPAS (EFMD Programme Accreditation System) accreditation by EFMD (The European Foundation for Management Development).

The Estonian Business School is managed by SA Estonian Business School Management Board, which is supervised and evaluated by the SA Estonian Business School Supervisory Board, that meets twice a year and has the responsibility to oversee EBS' financial status and strategy. The management board consists of three persons, one of whom is the Rector of EBS. The Rector receives input from the supervisory board, management board, EBS Senate, Alumni Advisory Board and Student Council.

The number of students in EBS has remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 1400 and 1500 in the past six years. There has been a slight increase of student numbers at the Bachelor level from 985 in 2013/14 to 1059 in 2018/19 as well as Doctoral students from 42 in 2013/14 to 56 in 2018/19. Number of Master students has dropped from 474 in 2013/14 to 293 in 2018/19.

There were two study programmes at bachelor level with admission in 2018/19 - International Business Administration and Entrepreneurship and Business Administration and one Management PhD programme. As of 2019-20, EBS admits students to two master's-level programmes – an international business administration MA and a generalist MBA.

Across all study levels, the number of international students grew steadily to around 40% of the student cohort.

Main impressions of the self-evaluation report and the visit

The panel wishes to commend EBS for their comprehensive SER and planning throughout the accreditation process. The particular challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, including a delayed site visit and late changes to the on-site complement of the panel, due to travel restrictions, were overcome by consummate planning on the part of EBS and excellent technological arrangements. The panel therefore wishes to express their thanks to the institution for the considerable flexibility shown throughout. Panel members participating online found meetings easy to follow and this equipped them to fully comprehend all of the information and viewpoints presented. Similarly, on-site panel members were met with excellent hospitality, were well taken care of and felt safe carrying out their work throughout the visit. The commitment of staff and in particular students to attend meetings during a vacation period was also appreciated by the panel, as were the open and honest responses to our questions.

Main changes on the basis of recommendations of the previous institutional accreditation

EBS received eleven recommendations at the time of their last accreditation in September 2013. The majority of these were related to two primary activities, namely; internationalisation and research. Standards 5 and 11 will provide detailed report commentary in these areas but, in summary, the current accreditation panel considers that EBS has made significant progress in addressing these recommendations albeit with continued room for further improvement. Specific recommendations included the development of a research strategy, selection of key performance relating to internationalisation and research, as well as for other areas of critical strategic importance to the institution, and increasing the number of international Faculty. Recommendations also included the need for an increase in the number of PhD students participating in research projects, the elaboration of research output requirements for staff and the introduction of a Vice Rector for International Relations.

EBS has produced a Development Plan 2019-23 which outlines its strategy for internationalisation and which is underpinned by seven goals and key performance objectives, as recommended by the previous panel. EBS has also made strides to recruit more international Faculty, with 9% of staff benefiting from an international profile in 2020 (albeit against a target of 20%). Despite not reaching its target, the institution, and in particular the new Rector, demonstrated clear intent to grow this number further, in part by recruiting talented students and consequently strengthening the reputation of the business school. A decision has recently been taken not to retain a dedicated Vice Rector for International Relations. This is based on the relatively small size of the institution and the fact that responsibility for internationalisation needs to rest with a range of senior staff and not one individual; the panel accepts this rationale.

As with the institution's strategy for internationalisation, EBS' approach to research is detailed in the Development Plan and, again, underpinned by key performance objectives. In line with the earlier recommendation, PhD students are involved in research projects and are even trusted to lead research groups. The panel describes that attempt to empower students as 'laudable' but cautions the importance of ensuring appropriate senior and experienced leadership to support the effective involvement of these new scholars in this activity. Another area where real progress has been made surrounds policy on research output. As detailed later in the report, the new approach focuses on attempts to ensure publications are produced for high standard journals with a wide international circulation; which in turn links to the institution's strategy for enhancing its reputation and growing international Faculty.

Recommendations not linked to internationalisation and research included the need to carry out a study on reasons for student attrition and to make improvements in the quality and use of feedback surveys. The panel found that the institution has a strong understanding of issues affecting drop-out rates, including the impact finance, private and family circumstances are having on retention. Feedback surveys were also found to be routinely in place and students felt able to raise issues of concern. Added to this, there was also evidence of student feedback leading to changes, however the panel found that EBS could strengthen communication to students about action taken in response to their feedback.

Overall the panel were satisfied that the institution had embraced the previous accreditation report, reflected on its findings in a considered manner and had acted faithfully to implement the recommendations.

Summary of the institutional accreditation findings

General Findings:

The accreditation panel found EBS to be an institution growing in confidence and maturity, especially in relation to areas identified as in need of improvement at the time of the last review. Staff were enthusiastic, motivated and driven by the strategy EBS has in place and there was a palpable sense of collegiality and collaboration which has been bolstered by recent internal communication enhancements.

The School's initial response to the emergence of Covid-19 is also worthy of mention at this stage. Historic investments in technology and systems together with effective support functions helped to ensure that any serious disruption to students' learning was prevented at a time when institutions globally were struggling to maintain a high quality experience.

EBS is a practical institution with an evident focus on entrepreneurship and this is a clear strength of the School's provision that is recognised by students and staff alike. Other strengths include the institution's Helsinki Campus, the number of courses taught in English, continued internationalisation of the faculty, global student recruitment and range of mobility tracks for students are all positive developments that underpin EBS' objective to become an internationally recognised business school and a destination of choice for staff and students.

The institution is operating from a strong financial platform, even in the current volatile circumstances, and the panel's tour of the facilities demonstrated the scale of investment in the physical resources at EBS. All floors of the Tallinn campus have recently been, or are in the process of being, refurbished. The result of this are state-of-the-art facilities for students, equipped with a new reading room, private consultation rooms and group study spaces.

The panel also recognised the societal contribution that EBS is making and their widespread involvement in external networks such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Estonia, Estonian Employers' Confederation and Estonian Service Industry Association, both in Estonia and Finland, as well as the considerable work done to strengthen research at EBS and the processes in place to uphold academic ethics, notwithstanding concerns about paper-mills.

These are not exhaustive examples of positive features of the School's provision but rather a selection of the most noteworthy. They should also be positioned, however, against a number of areas that would benefit from further strengthening.

The panel agreed that the emphasis on practical education needs to be kept under constant review in order to ensure an appropriate balance between practice and theory. This will help maintain EBS' competitiveness and is also needed in order to ensure that the institution is an attractive proposition for joint research projects with other, more 'traditional' research institutions. Additionally, this balance will support EBS in pursuit of research funding where they acknowledge they are competing with these same universities over what are also traditional funding streams.

While EBS has a responsive approach to employer feedback, in order to realise the real growth ambitions the School has, both in terms of size and reputation, EBS would benefit from formalising and expanding these arrangements with industry panels and other arrangements to ensure that curriculum and School activities are robustly informed by practitioners. Similarly, from a stakeholder perspective, EBS are organising events and activities for alumni and these are valued but could be better publicised and alumni could be more formally in programme development and review.

The School understands ethical issues well but some areas, such as paper-mills, are still posing a threat and EBS would benefit from deeper reflection as to how they can overcome these challenges.

The following Strengths, Recommendations and Opportunities for Further Improvement relate to Standards 1-12. Similar features are identified for the assessment sample of study programmes but are listed at that point in the report, rather than in this summary.

Strengths:

- The strategic plans and the annual follow-up combined with a strong ambition to adjust the plan if necessary.
- The well managed and strong financial position.
- The considered implementation of e-solutions such as the recently introduced intranet and “LMS” Canvas, in developing internal communications and differentiated learning options.
- Strong responsiveness to student feedback, and to external evaluations in general.
- An explicit and thorough policy document on the quality management system.
- EBS has a strong understanding of issues pertaining to inequality and ensures that all its employees and students are treated according to the principles of equal treatment laid down in the procedure for discrimination.
- EBS has been able to elevate their proportion of international students. The important foundation for this endeavour are the significant number of programmes taught in English. The School has also been able to attract senior faculty from abroad.
- The practical orientation of the faculty members, their experiences within industry and of entrepreneurial activity is of great value. Their involvement in teaching and thesis supervision is therefore very beneficial for the entrepreneurial development of students.
- Programmes are evaluated positively and their practical relevance has been in evidence for a number of years.
- A personalised approach and interview-based admission process that cover all prospective applicants, providing information that allow students to assess the adequacy of the programmes in relation to expectations.
- Varied and modern approaches to teaching employed across the School.
- Digital culture, reflected in the continuous improvement of digital platforms, and the development of modern learning environments with the support of LMS Canvas.

- Student-centred approaches at the level of study programmes and support services.
- Recognition by the labour market of graduates' professional and social skills, including the ability to solve concrete real-life challenges, practical approach and ability to think 'out-of-the-box'.
- Systematic initiatives to improve the transparency and quality of assessment at a course and programme level.
- The role of study consultants – acting as a “one-stop-shop” supporting students in academic planning and administrative issues (including for international students).
- A visible and accessible Student Council.
- The package of incentives to engage staff in RDC activity (e.g. concrete research time commitments; conference participation, professional development workshops), together with a publication policy and differentiated research requirements among staff positions.
- The empowerment of young staff with international experience in leadership positions and the involvement of doctoral students in research groups, projects and lecturing.
- EBS' widespread involvement in societal and industry networks involving external stakeholders.

Areas of concern and recommendations:

All twelve standards were found to 'Conform to Requirements'. Nevertheless, the panel also determined that there were a number of recommendations, relating to aspects of these standards that EBS should implement in order to address minor deficiencies with part of the relevant standard. Those recommendations are as follows:

- Strengthen the programme evaluation and development system, in particular the programme advisory board, to ensure that it benefits from active participation from all stakeholders, including students, staff alumni and external stakeholders.
- It is important that the procedures for ensuring coherence between the ILOs of the courses are explicitly linked to the ILOs of the programmes. We also suggest creating a formal procedure to ensure that overall principles of EBS are reflected in the programmes and courses.
- Continue to develop its processes, systems and arrangements for research at the institution. To ensure that, among other relevant areas, EBS continues to progress in relation incentivising research and the research profile of its faculty, the balance between research and practice, the development of its research community and the level of funding it secures for this aspect of its work.

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Strategic management	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality culture	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic ethics	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internationalisation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching staff	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study programme	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and teaching	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assessment	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning support systems	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research, development and/or other creative activity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service to society	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Key to evidence

E: interviews with employers and other external stakeholders

M: interviews with management staff

S: interviews with students

A: interviews with alumni

T: interviews with teaching staff

R: inspection of resources (e.g. library, laboratories)

1.1. Strategic management

Standard:

Development planning at the higher education institution is purposeful and systematic, involving various stakeholders. The higher education institution regularly evaluates the achievement of its stated objectives and the impact of its activities.

Guidelines:

The HEI has formulated the objectives and key results for its core activities – learning and teaching; research, development and creative activities, and service to society – taking into account national priorities and the needs of society, focusing on its strengths and reducing unnecessary duplication both within the HEI and throughout higher education in Estonia. The HEI is managed in accordance with its mission, vision and core values, as well as objectives set out on the basis of those principles. Achievement of the objectives and effects of the activities are evaluated regularly. Creativity and innovation are supported and given value in both core and support activities. Membership of the HEI (including students), as well as external stakeholders, is involved in developing and implementing the HEI's development plan and action plans. The HEI members share the core values that serve as a basis for the institution's development plan.

Indicator:

The rate of achieving the objectives set in the development/action plan (key results)

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EBS has thoroughly acted on the outcomes of the previous accreditation report. The main recommendations concerned internationalisation and research including the need for specific KPI's. Consequently, the self-evaluation report (SER) has distinctly commented the goals EBS established and how they were fulfilled.

The internationalisation recommendations mostly concerned quantitative indicators. One internationalisation recommendation was about having a vice-rector for internationalisation. In response, EBS has commented that internationalisation is an integral part of the core activities of EBS and thus has rejected the recommendation. This might be a forward-looking approach and similar to the view of professor John Hudzik (Comprehensive internationalisation: Institutional pathways to success. New York: Routledge, 2015).

The research at EBS is still at a developmental stage. Research output in publications is not measured and the number of academic staff with strong research experience is still quite low. This is understandable, as the teaching pathway has been the prime responsibility. However, in order to develop excellent education, there has to be a strong connection to research, both in the institution itself and in collaboration with scholars at other institutions, inside and outside the country. This is an issue, which is financially dependent both on donors and successfully received external funding, but it is also a question of organisational culture and research capacity among academic staff.

The credo of EBS is about stressing the importance of student and employer success, employee and student satisfaction and the necessity to have an impact on the development of Estonian society.

Internationalisation has also been put forward as essential, however the goals for EBS with regards to research and internationalisation are not distinctly outspoken.

EBS is a rather young institution – three decades – which gives rise to the potential for a very special joint community with staff and students assembling around its vision and mission, but also has the potential to create an opposite reaction where initial excitement has left the organisation and normal daily life in fact requires some extra injection. At which end of this scale does EBS lie? The self-assessment and the site visit document together with the result of a survey among staff and students indicates that EBS is closer to the first, more enthusiastic end of the line than the contrasting end, where strong injections are needed. The Strategic Plan 2019-2023 includes an amendment of the mission and vision of EBS. The document is supported by key principles of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability. Core values are also included: independence, cooperation, competence, creativity and inquisitiveness and profitability. The seriousness with which EBS promotes quality in education and research is demonstrated by the fact they base the new development plan on the EFMD standards and criteria. The goal for EBS is to attain institutional accreditation (EQUIS) by the end of the current plan period. This is a valuable injection for improving teaching, learning and research and an important means to challenge the organisation for even better quality.

The SER concludes that EBS has established a firm position in the Estonian higher education landscape through several collaborations inside the HE sector as well as collaborations with a number of business partners. However, the survey among staff and students highlights that there are some considerations about the position of EBS in this national landscape in Estonia and about just how competitive the School really is. The questions posed from staff and students in the survey show that there is a concern surrounding how to attract the best teachers and researchers, which indicates that a safe position in the HE landscape and in Estonian business life is not yet fully secured. The desire to ensure the wider public know more about EBS and its activities and contribution to society is also a sign that there is some frustration about the current position of the institution in these realms. The panel found that there is also a true wish to ameliorate the situation, especially in relation to collaborations between the university and industry.

EBS has a strategic development plan for a five-year period. The current plan is for the period 2019-2023 and the former covered 2016-2020. There is an overlap between the two plans, which shows an active attitude to have continuity in planning. The self-evaluation report admits a serious challenge during the first period, as Estonia, in 2013, decided that public universities should offer higher education free of charge. This drastically changed the competitive context in which EBS, as the only private institution in the country, was operating. By focusing on programme development, teaching methods and quality assurance EBS managed to handle the situation. The follow-up from EBS concludes that the School has worked hard to influence HE legislation for private universities with good results, in order to avoid ambiguities. The quality issue has been met by EPAS accreditation of the Business Administration BA programme.

EBS conducts annual in-depth analysis on how strategic goals have been reached and has amended the development plan according to the results of this analysis. Achievement of the objectives and effects of the activities are thus evaluated regularly. This is necessary, as a private university depending on student fees and contribution from private donors, has both financial and other challenges, which the public universities do not have. The financial situation for EBS is currently stable.

EBS has formulated objectives and key results for its core activities – especially learning and teaching, development and creative activities, and service to society – and thereby, taken the needs of society into account. Whether EBS has also taken national priorities into account and reduced unnecessary

duplication in Estonia is an unanswered question. However, the collaboration with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and the interdisciplinary cooperation with Estonian public universities show that there is an interest from EBS to contribute to national efforts in HE and research. Both the development plans and the annual follow-ups give guidance to the organisation focusing on its strengths and weaknesses.

The SER shows that EBS is mainly managed in accordance with its mission and vision and the objectives set out. It is critical that the core values are indicative for the daily mission. According to the SER, staff and students are involved in the annual follow up process and EBS' Senate is discussing the development plan – aside from the management – before approval. This implies that faculty members are involved in the strategic development of EBS. External stakeholders are also involved to a certain extent in developing and implementing the development plan and actions plans connected to it.

Strengths

- The strategic plans and the annual follow-up combined with a strong ambition to adjust the plan if necessary.

Opportunities for further improvement

- EBS should also ensure that it has taken national priorities into account and reduced unnecessary duplication in Estonia, when developing its activities.

1.2. Resources

Standard:

The higher education institution develops its staff and manages its physical and financial resources in a purposeful, systematic and sustainable manner. Internal and external communications of the higher education institution (including marketing and image-building) are targeted and managed.

Guidelines:

The HEI has an efficient staff development system. The principles and procedures for employee recruitment and development are based on the objectives of the HEI's development plan, and are fair and transparent. The career model of academic staff motivates talented young people to start their academic careers, creates opportunities for progress, and ensures sustainability of the academic staff. The principles for employees' remuneration and motivation are defined, available to all employees, and observed.

Allocation of the HEI's financial resources is based on the objectives of its development plan. The management and development of its infrastructure (buildings, laboratories, classrooms, IT systems, etc.) are economically feasible. Sufficient resources are available for updating the infrastructure for education and research, and/or a strategy exists enabling the HEI to acquire them.

A sufficient amount of textbooks and other learning aids are available, they are of uniformly high quality and accessible. Publicly offered information about HEI's activities (including study programmes) and the findings of external evaluations is correct, up to date, easily accessible and understandable. The HEI has a system to popularise its core activities and academic career opportunities. The HEI has a functioning system for internal and external communications, relevant to the target audiences. The HEI members are informed of the decisions relevant to them in a timely manner.

Employee satisfaction with management, working conditions, information flow, etc., at the HEI is surveyed regularly and the survey results are used in quality improvement activities.

Indicators:

- Distribution of revenues and costs (incl. RDC activities)
- The results of the staff satisfaction survey

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resource and staff development is based on the EBS Development Plan 2019-2023. Internal documents describe the principles and procedures for employee recruitment. Talent development has been a weak area previously. Therefore, EBS has set a goal to work out and implement new talent development processes for both faculty and staff by the end of 2020, including investment in new Talent Management software. EBS has established the position of Talent Acquisition and Development Manager to enable a systematic talent acquisition process; the position is under the Chancellor's responsibility. Previously this task was the responsibility of a single hiring unit and academic

departments ran their own inductions, training and topical presentations. Although in the early stages, the process is now becoming more centralised and efficient. The panel encourages the School to build on this and use this new central role to aid in the promotion of the institution's motivation scheme and to oversee the delivery and monitoring of a more comprehensive development programme for staff, ranging from core induction activity to presentations from external speakers.

During the panel interview with the Talent Acquisition and Development Manager the panel were informed that since the position was established 12 new staff members have been employed, with recruitment taking place in Estonia and internationally. A range of international recruitment platforms (for example FMA.org) are used and most of the recent academic vacancies have been filled with international candidates. **(M)**

Employment Rules for the Academic Staff contains the principles relating to salaries and to the career system and progression, faculty evaluation, and benefits. Employment Rules states that salaries and/or hourly wages are applied in the remuneration of core academic staff. The work of non-core academic staff is remunerated on the basis of standard credits. The principles are defined and available to all employees.

The fixed salary relates to the volume of work but at the Masters level there is an experiment among the staff who have created the nano degrees. The goal is to align individual and organisational objectives and to increase the motivation of teams. The results of the experiment are not yet known. 30% of staff's total workload can be used to participate in conferences, read, engage in scholarly activity and other related tasks. **(T)**

Teaching staff members commented, at the interview, that over the last 5 years the motivation system has become systematic. There are special frameworks and structures and it has been based on staff feedback. Historically, the focus at EBS has been teaching orientated however the emphasis on research has now been increased. A minority of staff interviewed by the panel reported that it is still not very clear what the motivation system is at EBS, but at the same time the feedback from these same staff members was that the Faculty is well motivated. **(T)**

According to financial statements EBS is liquid, well-capitalised, and uses little or no leverage. The EBS Development Plan 2019-2023 presents that a substantial overhaul of premises and technology is in progress. The development Plan sets a strategic goal for EBS to follow the development of digital technology and to have a state-of-the-art work and study environment. In 2019, EBS invested close to €500,000 in digital tools and services. In summer 2019, the previously scattered faculty and student services were moved together to newly renovated and refurbished premises, which have improved internal communication and job satisfaction.

The second and fifth floor refurbishments (rooms and technology, includes a library upgrade) was in progress during the visit. An architectural competition for new premises, next to the existing building, has been completed. The new premises will be part of moving into a life-long learning concept where working and learning is connected conceptually and physically. The design phase will begin in the autumn 2020. The EBS Group will finance the new building, and the school financials will not be affected by the development. **(R)**

EBS has made major investments in the premises (based on Rector's comments, 3M € 2020 and another 1M € 2021). Interviews with owners representatives, the Rector and accountant confirmed that there are no short-term financial risks and there is enough equity to execute current plans.

During 2017-18, EBS moved to Canvas, to improve access to knowledge, broaden choices of students and faculty and allow them to launch and test new services in the area of education. Since 2019, Canvas LMS has been topped with the LinkedIn Learn online course library, which is available for all students and faculty. In 2018-19 EBS developed its capability to record and stream classes and up to now, 50% of classrooms have recording capability. The new course catalogue platform is work in progress, as well as the new student information system and management information system.

The EBS Library comprises books, periodicals, online databases, etc. The library will be moved to newly renovated premises as part of the ongoing refurbishment. There is the need for some greater consideration of facilities, services and arrangements for Helsinki students as, for example, there is no library in EBS Helsinki. Other arrangements are in place however, students can access other libraries in Helsinki, can ask questions through Canvas and are provided with sessions in Helsinki and Tallinn on literacy skills. A previous arrangement whereby books were held in Helsinki and returned to Tallinn in the spring has largely been replaced now, in favour of students purchasing a number of their own texts.

The EBS communication strategy is set out in the Development Plan, and yearly activities are defined in the Communication Plan. The internal and external communication at EBS is the responsibility of the Office of Communication and Digital Transformation. Based on the latest Communication Plan, there is evidence that EBS has a systematic approach to communicate with its wide range of target groups (from perspective students to employers and foreign target groups), using a broad range of channels. The Communication Plan is a detailed working document to ensure all stakeholders receive up-to-date information. The external communication channels include university webpages, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and VK.com), local and national press.

Communication to alumni is managed through the website, annual e-mails and designated Facebook group. The School has set up an Alumni Council that meets twice a year and acts as an advisory body to the Rector.

The EBS brand is upheld daily by EBS faculty who are active in media via publishing articles, opinion pieces, feature stories, and giving interviews within their areas of expertise, as well as emphasising and echoing alumni success stories.

In 2019, EBS conducted an extensive internal communications survey supplemented with focus group interviews. In Summer 2019, based on the survey results and information gathered by interviews, EBS introduced a new internal communications tool, MS Teams, that enables a fast flow of information to all faculty and staff, video meetings and virtual team collaboration. Other steps to improve internal information flow include the launch of the staff intranet in 2020.

The main information channel for students, besides their corresponding study consultant, is the Student Intranet, there is also a Facebook group and the newsletter Ebster (run by the Student Council) available for students.

It is evident that there have been positive developments lately. Two years ago the Faculty was all over the building, whereas now all staff are physically located in the same area. EBS introduced a weekly team meeting every Thursday and these meetings are recorded for those who are unable to attend, conclusions are also emailed. There is a classical whiteboard in the kitchen and messages are posted in the online environment. The Student Council is the organisation that keeps close contact between the management and students. Based on interview comments, internal communication has been improving but still needs to be developed to ensure that all students and staff are informed about

actions taken by the School in a timely manner. For instance, there were comments that PhD students are occasionally on their own and other students reported that they experienced a lack of coordination between EBS Tallinn and EBS Helsinki. EBS needs to coordinate its communications mechanisms in order to allow all students to be made aware of positive changes affecting their student experience.[R, T]

Until now employee feedback is collected once a year as a part of the annual performance appraisal meeting with their immediate superior. EBS has not collected employees' satisfaction information through surveys until now, but, based on the interview with staff, held an online survey in the spring. A plan is now in place to conduct regular surveys moving forward.

EBS is a small organisation, it is easy to have an appointment with a member of management or talk to anyone in the office. The corporate culture is supportive and open which is positive. But considering EBS' goal to grow, it is advisable to enhance the coordination of the various communication mechanisms and internal information flows across the organisation.

Strengths

- The well managed and strong financial position.
- The considered implementation of e-solutions such as the recently introduced intranet and "LMS" Canvas, in developing internal communications and differentiated learning options.

Opportunities for further improvement

- The new talent acquisition manager is a good appointment and is making real progress but next steps could include better promotion of the motivation system and a more coherent overview of ongoing staff development for employees.
- It is advisable to enhance coordination of internal communications mechanisms and flows across the organisation.

1.3. Quality Culture

Standard:

The higher education institution has defined the quality of its core and support processes, and the principles of quality assurance. In the higher education institution, internal evaluation supports strategic management and is conducted regularly at different levels (institution, unit, study programme), the findings of internal and external evaluations are analysed and quality improvement activities implemented.

Guidelines:

Members of the HEI have agreed upon definitions for the quality of their core and support processes and are guided by them in their daily work. The HEI develops and publicises its policies and procedures for internal quality assurance (internal evaluation) and conducts regular internal evaluations, which take into account, inter alia, the standards set out in this Guide, and incorporates feedback from its members and/or from external experts. In the course of internal evaluations, peer learning, comparisons with other HEIs regarding their results and means for achievement, as well as a sharing of best practices take place, among other things.

Internal evaluation is based on the following key questions in quality management: What do you want to achieve, and why? How do you want to do it? How do you know that the activities are effective and will have the desired impact? How do you manage the quality improvement activities?

Regular reviews and enhancements of study programmes ensure their relevance, including their compliance with international trends.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EBS has a great number of elements in place to ensure quality monitoring of its core processes. The internal quality assurance responsibilities and processes are described in the document EBS Quality Assurance Framework, from 2016. The Handbook of the EBS Quality Management System has been made available on its website to all staff, students and other interested stakeholders. It is clear that EBS is responsive to student feedback, for example improving digital learning systems, overcoming the issues of student body heterogeneity and addressing gaps in curricula [S, A]. It is also clear that it has been responsive to recommendations in earlier accreditation processes, for example responding to weaknesses in the domain of research activity [M].

As a response to the recommendations of earlier assessments, EBS has sharpened its KPIs in all areas of activity. EBS has defined its goals, set targets and monitors its progress towards those targets [SER pg 14, Development Plans]. It is apparent that a few key indicators - particularly related to student numbers and student satisfaction - are constantly monitored at all organisational levels [M].

Teaching quality is regularly monitored at different levels within the institution. Course level evaluations are the dominant evaluation unit. The quality of the programme is further assessed by alumni (survey every 3 years), which is recognised by alumni. The survey is currently under revision for improvement. Employer feedback is also gathered occasionally. [T, S, A, SER, pg 16]

At a programme level, EBS has a systematic feedback and improvement loop in place. Students fill out course and programme evaluations, which have recently been improved based on recommendations from a previous assessment team. There are clear targets concerning what is seen as a satisfactory quality. One of the challenges of course evaluations are the relatively low response rates. The panel considered that EBS should develop a strategy for improving the response rate, considering how influential the course evaluations are, in revising courses as well as evaluating individual teachers.

At least once a semester, the relevant programme advisory board, that is composed of students, alumni, and employer representatives, evaluates and makes suggestions for programme development and amendments [SER pg 25]. Compared to other elements in the quality cycle, the programme advisory board seems to have less of a role. EBS would benefit from ensuring that the programme advisory board plays an active role in the case of all study programmes; as it fills an important function of evaluating the curriculum as a whole, not only individual courses. The heads of the programme do play an important function in gathering and approving information on all courses, overseeing the learning objectives of each course and the programme as a whole.

The EBS follows the European Code of Practice for Doctoral Studies in Management and Business, drafted by an EIASM/EDAMBA Joint Task Force, as a primary quality guideline for the EBS doctoral programme. Systematic procedures are in place to guide the candidate through the PhD cycle.

Research quality is monitored annually, where employees with responsibility in this field report their accomplished work, work in progress and participation in projects and conferences. The EBS has set a clear goal for moving from quantity to quality, e.g. to publish more in higher impact academic publications. At the same time, EBS is trying to develop a richer span of indicators to cover the full range of relevant research and development related activities.

Academic staff quality is evaluated by regular reviews, with respect to teaching, research and other activities. The heads of the departments evaluate the teaching quality of the lecturer regularly. If deficiencies occur, a corrective action plan will be drawn up and a deadline will be set for its implementation. If necessary, a tutor will be involved in providing teaching support. To ensure that the professors at EBS meet the agreed standards, external experts are involved in their internal evaluation, which takes place at least once every five years. Furthermore, EBS pays attention to the continuous improvement of staff teaching qualifications – such as improving teaching and assessment skills. It is also gathering data on the number of staff members participating in internal and external training.

In its quality assurance system, EBS puts emphasis on international accreditations. One programme – International Business Administration BA – has received the EPAS accreditation by EFMD [SER p 6]. An important part of the EBS quality system is compatibility with EFMD's accreditation criteria. Furthermore, EBS aims to secure institutional EQUIS accreditation by 2023. While some significant steps need to be made to realise this objective, the panel encourages EBS to pursue this ambition.

There is also evidence of ad hoc information collection to focus on potential problem areas and inform any corrective actions. For example, EBS has studied the reasons behind its drop-out rate, at different study levels, as recommended by the previous EKKK accreditation panel, and has undertaken some actions as a consequence of that study [SER p 17]. Furthermore, in 2019-20, EBS used internal and external reference points to ensure programme objectives were better with course learning outcomes and assessment, as recommended by the previous EKKK accreditation. [SER, M]

Strengths

- Strong responsiveness to student feedback, and to external evaluations in general.
- An explicit and thorough policy document on the quality management system.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Strengthen the programme evaluation and development system, in particular the programme advisory board, to ensure that it benefits from active participation from all stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni and external stakeholders.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Following work carried out in response to the previous EKKA accreditation, further refine KPIs to ensure a clear and consistent set exists that can be monitored clearly on an annual basis and communicated across the whole organisation.
- Ensure those KPIs distinguish between theoretical and applied research as well as consultancy activity.
- Develop a strategy to increase the response rate of student evaluations, to improve their validity and reliability.

1.4 Academic ethics

Standard:

The higher education institution has defined its principles for academic ethics, has a system for disseminating them among its members, and has a code of conduct including guidelines for any cases of non-compliance with these principles. The higher education institution has a functioning system for handling complaints.

Guidelines:

The HEI values its members and ensures that all its employees and students are treated according to the principle of equal treatment.

Employees and students of the HEI are guided by the agreed principles of academic ethics in all their activities.

The HEI respects fundamental values and policies of research set out in the document, 'Research Integrity', issued jointly by Estonian research institutions, the Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Research Council and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

The HEI supports its students and teaching staff in their understanding and responding to ethical issues. Teaching staff and students do not tolerate academic fraud, including cheating and plagiarism, and they will act immediately upon any such occurrence.

Management of complaints from HEI members (including discrimination cases) is transparent and objective, ensuring fair treatment of all parties.

Indicator:

- Number of academic fraud cases

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EBS has developed a clear strategy and understanding of the standard of academic ethics for its student body and the faculty. Consequently, students and academic staff can understand and respond to such needs effectively. There is a clear and non-tolerant approach to academic fraud, including cheating and plagiarism by faculty and students. A workable complaints procedure, concerning ethical issues (including discrimination cases), is in place which appears to be transparent and objective, enabling EBS to ensure fair treatment for all stakeholders.

When it comes to research ethics, EBS is also following the guidelines for research ethics stipulated in the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the Code of Ethics of Estonian Scientists. Estonian higher education institutions have defined and agreed on the principles for academic ethics, values, and principles covering research activities in these two policy documents.

The details provided in the SER and facts collected through panel interviews demonstrate that EBS has a considerate academic fraud and plagiarism policy in place (**SER p.28**). The institution is taking a proactive stance towards preventing academic fraud and misconduct, including plagiarism among both the student body and their faculty. EBS has taken some measures, for instance, a regular and consistent communication for preventing academic fraud. Faculty members inform students about the nature and different forms of academic fraud at departmental meetings and at the briefings of

pre and final defences. The guidelines provided to faculty members for reporting and solving any academic fraud cases are consistent and appropriate.

EBS renews its guidelines for students' papers and assignments on a consistent basis to ensure the faculty members are implementing these guidelines which provide for an up-to-date understanding of academic integrity. Seminars on academic misconduct are also organised to raise awareness of the seriousness of academic integrity and related challenges (**SER p.29, T**). The online virtual learning environment LMS Canvas' mandatory course includes academic integrity and citation etiquette to provide an understanding to its student body on the standards of academic integrity and the level of seriousness with which any plagiarism is treated at the institution.

EBS has implemented a workable system for dealing with plagiarism cases. All cases of academic misconduct are expected to be reported, with evidence, by the respective lecturer, to the head of the Office of Academic Affairs. Outcomes at this stage can include a written warning or expulsion, depending on the severity of the case. In cases of proven academic misconduct, the implicated students cannot resubmit their work and that may result in losing credit points, failed courses or a failed final thesis. After three recorded cases of academic misconduct EBS has the right to expel the student concerned. Academic fraud in the final thesis results in automatic expulsion. While consequences in the case of the final thesis may appear harsh, an effective academic misconduct procedure, based on a good strategy, is in place. EBS has put into place some good initiatives on academic integrity but there is need to have an inclusive policy to deal with challenges such as self-plagiarism, and open science for faculty and student research publications. This is important for supporting the long-term development of high integrity among the academic community at the institution. Additionally, it is essential for the visiting faculty to have an awareness and clear understanding on academic integrity issues. For example, there is a need to adopt a consistent approach to the use of the plagiarism detection system among faculty members, including visiting faculty for research, teaching and learning purposes (**SER p.30, T**).

Plagiarism detection software (Urkund) supports faculty by providing them with an opportunity to check similarities in the draft version submissions to avoid any plagiarism and/or poor citations/references. The panel discovered that EBS has not yet developed a consistent and formally documented approach to deal with the possible use of paper-mill services by students for ghost-writing. The panel suggests developing a good strategy considering the increased prevalence of ghost-writing services as a means of cheating. It is suggested in this regard to benchmark against successful systems and practices implemented by other higher education institutions.

It is important to note that EBS does not tolerate any form of gender, sexual, ethnic, national, religious and/or any other form of discrimination from and of faculty and students. EBS has a reasonably good functioning system for handling complaints regarding academic misconduct, fraud and/or discrimination.

Strengths

- EBS has a strong understanding of issues pertaining to inequality and ensures that all its employees and students are treated according to the principles of equal treatment laid down in the procedure for discrimination.

Opportunities for further improvement

- EBS should focus on an inclusive academic integrity policy, including self-plagiarism, for faculty research publications which supports the long-term development of high integrity among the academic community at the institution.
- Develop a formal and documented approach to tackling the threat posed by paper-mills, which is benchmarked against good practice at other institutions.
- Revise the Code of Academic Ethics on a regular basis to ensure it addresses all aspects of academic integrity and covers all target groups.

1.5 Internationalisation

Standard:

The higher education institution has set objectives for internationalisation and assesses the attainment of these objectives regularly. The higher education institution has created an environment that encourages international mobility of students and teaching staff, supporting the development of learning, teaching and RDC activities, as well as the cultural openness of its members and Estonian society in general.

Guidelines:

The HEI creates opportunities for international student exchanges by offering study programmes and/or modules taught in English. The learning environment at the HEI supports internationalisation and cultural openness.

Recognition of qualifications and recognition of prior learning and work experiences for student admission and programme completion are in accordance with the quality requirements set by the HEI, are systemic and consistent with the expected learning outcomes and support international student mobility.

The organisation of studies at the HEI facilitates student participation in international mobility. The HEI has agreements with foreign higher education institutions and, through international exchange, sends its students abroad to study and undertake practical trainings, providing comprehensive support for this. Members of the teaching staff encourage students to participate in international mobility.

International lecturers participate in the process of teaching, including supervision of doctoral theses.

The HEI supports and recognises the participation of its teaching staff in international teaching, research or creative projects, as well as their teaching, research or creative work and personal development which are performed at HEIs abroad.

Indicators:

- Teaching staff mobility (in-out)
- Student mobility (in-out)
- Number of English-taught study programmes by main units and levels of study

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Internationalisation is an integral component of the EBS strategy. Firstly, in terms of international education EBS has managed to establish 57 Erasmus+ agreements with international partners, of which 22 are triple crown accredited. This reflects high quality and also that EBS is an internationally attractive partner and “preferred partner” in Estonia for leading international business schools. In order to achieve EBS’ overall ambition “to be an international accredited institution by EQUIS” the panel advise EBS to build an even closer relationship to one or more of these 22 partners. In this way EBS could learn best practice with teaching, research and dissemination. EBS could also reach out by inviting selected partners to EBS and/or explore double degrees and other initiatives. In short, we suggest deeper collaboration with selected international university partners.

The second strength concerns the composition of English taught programmes (1 BA, 2 MA, 1 MBA, 1 PHD) and the internationalisation of students. It is remarkable that the proportion of international

students has increased from 15% in 2013-14 to 40,6% in 2018-19 (SER p. 32). These figures confirm that EBS is the leading international university in Estonia. The MBA programme, Management in Digital Society, was discontinued in 2018 in order to be renewed. The most important elements have since been integrated into the new two years MBA programme. (table 3.5.).

In the autumn of 2020 EBS launched a new bachelor programme entitled Entrepreneurship in the Digital Era. The programme is taught in English and it built on the experiences of the BA Entrepreneurship and Business Administration (table 1.2). Entrepreneurship is an important field for Estonia and for EBS and how it is regarded in an international context. This impression was confirmed by the international panel of alumni at the accreditation visit. The panel considered that perhaps the digitalisation and entrepreneurship field could be merged in a new international programme.

The third strength which we will point to concerns the internationalisation of EBS' staff. The permanent faculty span nine nationalities of which eight faculty members are from abroad and forty-five from Estonia. In order to attract international lecturers, EBS has employed an internal recruitment function. This important initiative could be followed by an increasing effort to make EBS even more attractive for top scholars with research ambitions. This could include further faculty mobility encouragement.

Beyond these central strengths identified by the panel, Chapter 2 of the SER details the School's response to recommendations from the previous EKKA accreditation panel. Recommendation 1 from the previous institutional accreditation emphasised that EBS should "select key performance indicators (KPIs) in the areas that are crucial to the future of the University (internationalization, research), which would provide benchmarks for comparisons with other business schools and be used for continuous development." (SER p. 14). In response to this recommendation EBS identified seven goals under internationalisation related objectives (p. 14-15). Of these seven goals four have been achieved, two have partly been achieved and one has not been achieved.

The first goal which was only partly achieved was the international accreditation. EBS have achieved EPAS accreditation for the bachelor's programme in International Business Administration. However, EBS has not entered the EQUIS accreditation yet. We highly recommend that EBS make a detailed and concrete plan for this important objective. As mentioned above, EBS could gain from a close partnership with a triple crown business school, and it is critical to allocate the necessary resources and decision-power to the unit which leads this process.

The second goal that was partly achieved was the proportion of international core faculty. The aim was at least 20% in 2020. In fact, the figure was only 9% of core faculty in 2020. We are nevertheless confident that EBS has taken some necessary steps towards changing this statistic but there is further room for improvement as we have outlined above.

The one goal that has not yet been achieved concerns more international students, with an aim of at least 60% international students by 2020 of which 70% were to be from Finland and 30% from other countries. As mentioned above, we actually regard it as a strength that EBS reached 40,8% in 2020, and it might be in the case that the KPI was too ambitious. It is challenging to internationalise at such a fast pace as international students require administrative and academic support. At the panel sessions of the site visit, alumni representatives mentioned the unfortunate situation of isolated international students. It is thus better to internationalise step by step. The proportion of students from Finland is apparently at 86% and, in order to tackle the issue of international isolated groups, it seems more important to get this figure down than the total figure up.

The Development Plan 2019-2023 does not include a separate section on internationalisation but rather an integrated approach to internationalisation, which is included explicitly in several aspects of the report, such as section 1.6. “active international academic and corporate relations are an integral part of the operations of EBS” and sections 1.10. and 1.11. which explicitly emphasise the importance of an international student body and an international faculty at EBS.

The international ambitions of the Development Plan are mirrored in concrete 2023-indicators, of which the five most important are (Development Plan 2019-2023, p. 3-7):

- Be an internationally accredited institution by EQUIS
- Have “A large part” of EBS will follow a longer international learning experience (one semester of study, project or research) abroad, while 90% of EBS’ faculty have worked a minimum of three months abroad (or been entrepreneurs)
- Have at least 40% of students which have gained a study experienced abroad
- Have at least 20% full-time employees whom are a holding foreign citizenship

The panel reflected on the feasibility of these indicators and challenges associated with realising them. Based on that reflection, we suggest that EBS take action in order to create a concrete task force which prepares the EQUIS accreditation. The effort could be supported by closer partnership with accredited institutions through which EBS could learn best practices.

The second indicator is formulated in a rather soft way and we recommend that in the future EBS is more concrete in its ambition for international learning experiences. In a post-corona future, it might be worth considering a broader definition of international learning than mobility. Learning could take place virtually across borders for instance through future exchange of online electives with selected partners.

The third indicator addresses the ambition above, and it is recommended to change this formulation from “study experience abroad” towards “international learning experience” for the reasons mentioned above.

The final recommendation is very concrete, and we are confident that EBS is on the right track, for instance through the new recruitment system and various other initiatives including the language centre. Still there is room for improvement for instance in relation to further encouraging and enabling teaching and training mobility.

Strengths

- EBS has been able to elevate their proportion of international students. The important foundation for this endeavour are the significant number of programmes taught in English. The School has also been able to attract senior faculty from abroad.

Opportunities for further improvement

- EBS has several options for improvement. First and foremost, EBS should carefully prepare a future international accreditation under AACSB. Secondly, and related, EBS should consider creating closer partnership relations to selected triple crown universities in order to learn best practices. Finally, it is important that EBS ensure that international students are integrated so that national clusters of students are avoided.
- Ensure effective plans are in place to meet internal targets relating to the proportion of international faculty

1.6 Teaching staff

Standard:

Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development.

Guidelines:

Members of the teaching staff engage systemically in development of their professional and teaching skills, improve their supervision competence, and share best practices with one another.

Teaching staff's participation in research, development and/or creative activities supports the teaching process and ensures competence for the supervision of students' theses (including doctoral theses).

Members of the teaching staff collaborate in fields of teaching, research and/or creative work within the HEI and with partners outside the HEI, e.g. with field practitioners, public sector organisations, companies, other research and development institutions, and lecturers from other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions. Qualified visiting lecturers and practitioners participate in the teaching process.

When assessing the work of teaching staff (including their periodical evaluations), the effectiveness of their teaching as well as their research, development and creative work is taken into account, including student feedback, the effectiveness of their student supervision, development of their teaching and supervisory skills, their international mobility, and their entrepreneurial experience or other work experience in their fields of speciality outside the HEI.

Indicators:

- Competition for elected academic positions
- Results of students' feedback about the teaching staff
- Teaching staff participating in continuing training or other forms of teaching skills development

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teaching is conducted by an appropriate number of professionally competent members of well-qualified teaching staff at EBS. The information provided in the SER and the data collected during the site visit both support this and moreover, highlights that EBS support the development of learners and value their own continuous self-development as well. The permanent faculty is supported by visiting faculty from industry and partner universities, which is vital for enriching students' learning experiences and intercultural skills. The inclusion of visiting faculty and a careful balance of practitioners and academics ensures EBS offers diverse practical hands-on classroom experience for students. Some of the visiting faculty members have relevant research experience, and that brings novelty to the courses. EBS also engages these professionals both in teaching and programme development and this is beneficial considering the importance of practitioners, especially for business and entrepreneurial education; this is evidently one of the highlights under this standard. There is a good balance of national and international faculty members. In 2018-19, 61% of visiting faculty at EBS were Estonian in origin and 39% international as per information provided in the SER. This is a reasonable balance of international members in the visiting faculty, however, as mentioned elsewhere in the report, the increased share of international faculty members from 2% in 2013-14 to 9% in 2018-

19, while it represents a significant increase, needs to be improved still further. In addition, as per the information provided, there are fewer PhD holders compared to the permanent faculty. Thus, there is still a need to collaborate more with national and international PhD qualified academics to strike the right balance. As per the SER, in September 2018, EBS implemented the new employment rules for the academic staff, which among other regulations, sets precise workload proportions for both research and teaching tasks for different academic positions (SER p.15). EBS has thus addressed one of the recommendations from the previous accreditation panel to deal with this issue effectively (recommendation II). This, surely, is a way forward for balancing research efforts with high-quality teaching and evidence-based programme design. Nevertheless, the School should reflect on whether new, ambitious targets could be introduced to further support efforts to ensure teaching is informed by research. For instance, in some programmes, such as the IBA, only approximately 50% of the teaching staff hold a PhD. While EBS have clearly been concentrating efforts to increase the number of staff with a PhD this could be supported by new targets could include the proportion of staff it wants to hold a doctoral degree in the coming 3-year period.

According to the EBS development plan 2019-2023, the institution aims for its faculty and staff to be international, involved in consultancy, research and development activities and proficient in modern study and instructional methods. Moreover, EBS also intends for them to be more analytical, motivated, open to experiments, and ethically minded. These appear to be very ambitious plans yet vital for a HEI such as EBS and would be crucial for them in achieving their mission. The School is also aiming for the faculty, staff, and students to use the state-of-the-art e-learning solutions for achieving a better user experience corresponding to the best international benchmarks.

EBS places an emphasis on employing faculty members with international experience for both full-time and part-time permanent positions. Progress has been made in this respect, even though hiring internationally qualified and experienced staff is challenging for the School due to factors such as the burden on resource, length of the process, level of Estonian compensation packages and the country's geographic position. Therefore, there is a need to devise a good strategy to deal with such factors effectively for a better outcome in the long term. The panel recognises that since the self-assessment report was submitted efforts have continued in this area and international lecturers now represent 18% of the overall faculty. It is vital for EBS to continue with these efforts in international recruitment to not only improve the composition of the faculty but to achieve the internationalisation goals.

EBS understands its responsibility for recruiting and maintaining both permanent and visiting faculty and implements various approaches in this regard through the institutional Faculty Development Plan. The faculty development process focuses on some key factors in raising faculty competencies and skills development for improving teaching and learning quality. In the last few years, EBS involved doctoral students in both teaching and research activities to prepare them as possible future faculty members. Thus, these efforts are essential in developing faculty with a good understanding of the internal culture. However, it was not obvious, from the SER and the panel discussion with the teachers, how the staff performance management and quality assurance system was being used to identify areas that the School needed to address through staff development opportunities [T]. It seemed as though a more ad hoc approach was in place for this purpose and the panel determined a more consistent approach would be beneficial.

It is important to note that EBS analyses the alignment of the programmes and course learning outcomes. The results of such analysis are used in the development of requisite competencies and a unified understanding by the faculty members for achieving programme learning outcomes and

supporting a quality student experience. This is encouraging and demonstrates that EBS aims to build a high-quality and insightful teaching and learning environment.

According to the SER, a lot of professional self-development takes place through internal training and development activities and also through mobility and international cooperation programmes, including participation in research conferences [SER p.15, T]. The panel viewed the recruitment of a Senior Research Fellow to devise and deliver in-house training provision as a positive development. The panel also considered that EBS may benefit from formalising this support through implementation of an in-house, or even external, teaching certification for higher education teaching and learning. This is certainly not a requirement at this stage; however, it is deemed crucial for the institutional growth plans which look to ensure EBS becomes an internationally recognised business school.

EBS has a good evaluation system for permanent faculty to assess their performance both on a short and long-term basis. This is done through performance appraisals conducted by the heads of respective departments at the end of each academic year. Factors such as teaching, research and development, consultancy activities and student feedback are part of such annual appraisals. The results and findings of this structured performance evaluation process are used in the development and improvement of faculty's requisite lecturing and supervisory skills, in addition to making promotion and demotion decisions. This appears to be in-line with the standards and benchmarks for the faculty performance evaluations.

EBS has implemented an effective system to measure staff skills and quality as well as student satisfaction levels with the teaching quality of faculty members. This is accomplished through the feedback questionnaire at the end of each semester. The questionnaire covers all the essential topics including the lecturers and students' contribution to the course, and the students' general satisfaction level. In general, and as per the information shared, the feedback results are positive, as more than 50% of all the students evaluate the courses remarkably higher than the average [SER p.15, T]. However, this should be seen carefully as this is only one form of anonymous evaluation through a self-selection sampling technique. This cannot cover or provide high-quality results for 365-degree evaluations conducted by some of the top institutions internationally.

The Office of Academic Affairs analyses the aggregated feedback and shares it with the heads of departments, heads of programmes and heads of graduation committees and with the management for necessary actions. It is important for the faculty members to access personal feedback, as it is vital to see both the positive and the negative feedback for future course deliveries and personal development. Additionally, EBS should be able to build on the appointment of the Senior Research Fellow and training recently delivered on hybrid teaching methods to develop a strong and ambitious "Teach & Learn" unit which could provide support to all Faculty, including under-performing lecturers. The purpose should also be to keep the standards of teaching high and to ensure the "state-of-the-art" level which is so critical to EBS' international ambitions.

Strengths

- The practical orientation of the faculty members, their experiences within industry and of entrepreneurial activity is of great value. Their involvement in teaching and thesis supervision is therefore very beneficial for the entrepreneurial development of students.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Faculty development is in place but needs to be consistently informed by the outcomes of the University's quality assurance processes.
- It should be possible to engage more PhD qualified visiting faculty members by arranging collaborations with doctorally qualified academics nationally and internationally either individually or through their institutions. They could be engaged only for research, teaching or both. This will also help in increasing the pool of PhD supervisors and can help PhD students find external PhD co-supervisors on diverse research topics from a larger pool. This is important for future international accreditations such as the EQUIS accreditation.
- EBS should consider to setting-up a strong and ambitious "Teach & Learn" unit which could provide support to under-performing lecturers. The purpose should also be to keep the standards of teaching high and to ensure the "state-of-art" level which is so critical to EBS' international ambitions.
- EBS to consider implementing an in-house or even external teaching certification for higher education teaching and learning.
- EBS should consider including a new ambition to ensure that at least 75% of faculty hold a PhD within the next 2-3 years. It is important that the academic level is sustained, and the principle of research-based teaching is not jeopardised by the need for teaching by practitioners.

1.7 Study programme

Standard:

Study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders, higher education and professional standards, and trends in the relevant fields. The objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent. The study programmes support creativity, entrepreneurship and development of other general competencies.

Guidelines:

In planning study programmes and student places, the HEI pursues its objectives and the needs of the labour market, and takes into account national strategies and the expectations of society. The planned learning outcomes are in accord with the requirements for the corresponding level of the Estonian Qualifications Framework.

Expected student workloads defined in the study programmes are realistic and consistent with the calculation that 1 ECTS credit equals 26 student learning hours.

Theoretical learning and practical learning are interconnected. The content and organisation of practical trainings support the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme and meet the needs of all parties.

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The SER and the site visit confirmed that the study programmes at EBS are designed and developed in accordance Estonian higher education legislation. This is the formal basis for the EBS programmes on all three levels of academic studies. The most important feature of the EBS programmes is the ability to bridge theory and practice while at the same time remaining relevant. The SER (tables 3.1. & 3.2.) confirm that student evaluations demonstrate a high degree of satisfaction insofar as general course averages are concerned.

Recommendation XI of the previous accreditation report suggested that students should be provided continuous feedback on “their progress towards meeting the intended learning outcomes.” (p. 16). According to the SER, the programme design at EBS now follows the constructive alignment approach, which is the underpinning concept behind:

- the current requirement for programme specifications
- declarations of ILOs (intended learning outcomes)
- assessment criteria
- the use of the criterion-based assessment

The constructive alignment approach seeks student feedback on the important alignment between the ILOs and the teaching activity. This alignment is a critical component in higher education; however, in the current state the constructive alignment approach lacks an important component in order to ensure that the objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes, are specific and coherent. This missing component is a continuous assessment of the coherence between three critical levels: the course specific study objectives and the general objectives

of the programme and finally the institutional learning principles of EBS. In the SER it is stated that “there are courses in LMS Canvas where the ILOs of the courses are not explicitly linked to the ILOs of the programme and assessment criteria”. We suggest that a formalized, explicit procedure is established in order to ensure this coherence and that the procedure also encompasses the level of the institution. This is not an exercise of centralisation rather than a quality control of the coherence of the objectives across EBS. It is the head of the department together with the faculty members who review and revise the course syllabus. It might be necessary in order to ensure the above-mentioned coherence of ILOs to include the programme heads in this process. In the present structure there seems to be a danger for the presence of uncoordinated ILOs which only will be discovered during the student evaluation process.

Quality management is the responsibility of the head of studies (Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral) and in collaboration with the respective councils. The programme quality management includes all important aspects of the development and definition of the programme, including the collection and analysis of recommendations from EBS personnel, students, employers and alumni. During the panel interviews, some alumni representatives expressed uncertainty in relation to the formal procedures in terms of collecting feedback for study programmes and new curriculum development. It may benefit EBS to consider how a wider number of alumni can be formally involved in programme development.

Section 3.7.2. of the SER concerns the process around study programme design and review. The periodic internal programme review is carried out once per year and this is an efficient and important way to ensure continued assessment of the programmes. EBS has introduced a mobility window in the bachelor programmes, which is important for the mobility of the students. At the MBA level, the one-year Management Programme has been introduced including a master’s thesis written as a team project, which is an important improvement of academic level in particular because it includes the co-supervising approach known from the doctoral programmes.

Strengths

- Programmes are evaluated positively, and their practical relevance has been in evidence for a number of years

Areas of concern and recommendations

- It is important that the procedures for ensuring coherence between the ILOs of the courses are explicitly linked to the ILOs of the programmes. We also suggest creating a formal procedure to ensure that overall principles of EBS are reflected in the programmes and courses.

1.8 Learning and teaching

Standard:

Admissions requirements and procedures ensure fair access to higher education and the formation of a motivated student body. The higher education institution systemically implements a student-centred approach that guides students to take responsibility for their studies and career planning, and supports creativity and innovation. Graduates of the higher education institution, with their professional knowledge and social skills, are competitive both nationally and internationally.

Guidelines:

The teaching process takes into account students' individual abilities and needs, and supports their development. Organisation of independent work and classroom teaching motivates students to take responsibility for their studies.

Teaching methods and learning aids used in the teaching process are modern, appropriate and effective, and support development of a digital culture.

Students are motivated to learn and contribute to improving the quality of their studies by providing meaningful feedback on both the learning process and the organisation of studies.

Doctoral students plan their studies, as well as their research and development activities, in collaboration with their supervisor(s), setting specific objectives for each year and assuming responsibility for achieving those objectives.

Indicators:

- *Student satisfaction with the content and organisation of studies*
- *Alumni satisfaction with the quality of studies*
- *Employer satisfaction with the preparation of the graduates*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The admission process at EBS is transparent, well-thought through and revised annually. It focuses on accessing prospective students' fit with the courses, namely the extent to which a student's profile and her ambitions are aligned with those of EBS ("motivation, willingness to grow, independent thinking"). Admission requirements and criteria are defined in advance and diffused across multiple channels. EBS is part of the "Study in Estonia" alliance, which seems helpful in expanding the international reach of the programmes.

What is particularly noticeable is that EBS runs interviews with all prospective applicants to assess their motivations, soft skills (e.g. argumentation), career drivers and future plans [SER, p. 41, A, S]. The admission committee in the interview is balanced and diverse (composed by lecturers, alumni and current students). Admission interviews take place three times a year, allowing candidates to flexibly choose the timing that fits them the best (also reducing the management load that would come with concentration). Admission procedures also take place at the doctoral level, with a committee being formed to assess expectations, previous training and skills of the candidate.

EBS has a student-centred approach, catering for different study trajectories (e.g. full-time, part time, distant studies). Taking into consideration that a large share of students in Estonia study and work

simultaneously, EBS has devised flexible study formats over time, combining daytime and session-based studies.

EBS has developed introduction days and orientation sessions for news students at the Bachelor and Master level, involving information sessions about the values of EBS, code of conduct, as well as on other practical matters. The offering of initial courses on the “development of study skills” (Bachelor level) and personality tests to support course selection and orientation are also interesting practices – with the first being devised to fight the drop-out rates that occur in the first semesters.

Teaching methods are, in general, appropriate and modern. Students attached value to the practical orientation of education, the focus on “real-life” matters, the use of cases as learning devices, and the focus on bi-directional interaction in several courses -e.g. many presentations and group discussions [A, S]. Lecturing tradition at EBS is based on physical presence in the classroom, resonating with the networking and community building dimensions valued by EBS. Yet, the digital ecosystem at EBS – including digital tools and remote learning environments – is becoming increasingly well developed to facilitate blended learning and flipped classroom methods. Students benefit from access to online course subscriptions (LinkedIn learning for higher education) and dedicated platforms (LMS Canvas). The online and blended learning environment seems to work properly, facilitating different sorts of interactions and complementing face-to-face lecturing (e.g. simulations, groups assignments), as well as a connection between the Tallinn and Helsinki units.

The analysed sample of online courses on LMS Canvas reveals well-organised digital learning environments, with detailed syllabus, materials and assignment platforms. They provide personalised content and at the same time there is a degree of standardisation across courses (e.g. “rules of the game” for the course and explicit focus on authorship and ethics). The digital infrastructure in place facilitated a fast transition to full remote learning under the recent COVID-19 lockdown and is now set to facilitate other hybrid models. Yet, evidence from the assessment visit suggests that the quality of online courses and learning environments still varies significantly within programmes, notwithstanding the fast digitalisation trend.

Students provide feedback on their studies, both formally (through surveys) and informally (through direct feedback to lecturers). There is evidence that their voices are heard, yet not always leading to rapid responses [S, T]. In some instances, courses’ syllabus were significantly altered in response, and lecturers explicitly showed students that their voice led to improvements. Other examples include changes in the thesis development procedure and assessment (e.g. introduction of capstones) and other changes to cater for part-time and working students.

At the PhD level, student support and study programmes are more individualised. Beyond a system to assess milestones, there are mentoring routines in place so that students can plan their activities and objectives with supervisors along the way. Teaching and the participation in R&D projects are incentivised alongside PhD research. PhD students have opportunities to attend conferences, seminars and external workshops as part of their studies [S, T].

EBS runs a survey every three years about alumni’s satisfaction with the programmes and employability; moreover, it collects other insights through bi-annual board meetings with alumni representatives. Data from the SER (p. 43) suggests that the value attached by alumni to their EBS learning experience is high, namely linked to what are considered up-to-date programmes, the School's reputation in society and the network they could develop and access from EBS. Employability is assessed as very high as well; results from the surveys suggest that EBS graduates are competitive in Estonia and abroad (20% working in another country), and become employed in a variety of sectors, occupations and positions.

Employers confirm that EBS graduates are endowed with relevant toolboxes and practical skills, including the ability to solve problems, to think outside the box, “readiness” to work, proactiveness, confidence, and good English skills **[A, S, E]**. Moreover, at the level of EBS, employers recognise the institutional ability to react quickly to changing labour market demand and the design of flexible study programmes.

Strengths

- A personalised approach and interview-based admission process that cover all prospective applicants, providing information that allow students to assess the adequacy of the programmes in relation to expectations.
- Varied and modern approaches to teaching employed across the School.
- Digital culture, reflected in the continuous improvement of digital platforms, and the development of modern learning environments with the support of LMS Canvas.
- Student-centred approaches at the level of study programmes and support services.
- Recognition by the labour market of graduates’ professional and social skills, including the ability to solve concrete real-life challenges, practical approach and ability to think ‘out-of-the-box’.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Consider the creation of an office for digital learning. As IT moves from providing technical support towards the core of EBS mission – embracing pedagogy, teaching methods and course quality – the organisational structure of EBS should reflect this shift. This change will help to ensure that all lecturers become equally competent in operating the School’s online platforms.
- To keep strengthening the links between teaching and research, with an eye to maintaining updated programmes that not only focus on practical challenges but also provide a solid theoretical background to understand real-life affairs.

1.9 Student assessment

Standard:

Assessments of students, including recognition of their prior learning and work experiences, support the process of learning and are consistent with expected learning outcomes. The objectivity and reliability of student assessments are ensured.

Guidelines:

The assessment criteria are understandable to students and students are informed about them in a timely manner. Members of the teaching staff cooperate in defining assessment criteria and apply similar approaches.

Assessment methods are versatile and relevant, and assess the degree of achievement of learning outcomes (including general competencies).

If possible, more than one staff member is involved in the development of assessment tasks and student assessments. Along with assessments, students receive feedback that supports their individual development.

The HEI supports development of the teaching staff's assessment competencies.

Evaluation of doctoral students is transparent and impartial. Its purpose is to support the development of doctoral students, to assess the effectiveness of their current work and to evaluate their ability to complete the doctoral studies on time and successfully defend their doctoral theses. When recognising prior learning and work experience towards the completion of the study programme, results obtained through the studies and work experiences (the achieved learning outcomes) are assessed.

Students are aware of their rights and obligations, including the procedures for challenges regarding assessments.

Indicator:

- *The number of credit points applied for and awarded under the accreditation of prior and experiential learning scheme (APEL); this does not include credit points transferred from a different study programme at the same HEI.*

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EBS has recently undertaken several initiatives to improve the quality, transparency and coordination of its assessment.

EBS pays great attention to the variety of assessment methods it uses. Besides final exams and essays, use is also made of presentations, case studies by industry practitioners, project work, self-reflection, peer-assessment and gaming among others. **[SER p. 44, S, A]** EBS have taken seriously the comment from an earlier programme accreditation that more summative assessment is needed, as well as transparency in assessment. Assessment is a prominent topic in staff development, for instance at internal training sessions over the last two years **[M, T]**. Furthermore, a faculty summer seminar in 2020 was planned to focus on assessment training, where faculty would have worked with their actual course to improve the assessment methods and criteria. Due to the Covid-19 situation, the seminar was postponed.

While the diversity of assessment methods is valued and encouraged, the coordination of different assessments at a programme level is not yet fully developed. At least in some programmes, the head

of the programme collects information about, and approves, assessment plans, which offers a possibility for further coordination [T, M]. In 2019, a pilot was initiated to include information on assessment in course descriptions; and, if this is a successful experience, the practice will be spread across all provision at EBS. As the SER correctly points out, such a system is indeed needed to “allow the students to get a systematic, transparent, compact, and comparable overview of the learning expectations and course content” (p. 44). An overview of various assessment methods per programme is important for programme development. Programmes are not required to compile a comprehensive assessment plan, which would link programme objectives to course level assessment, including how to assess specific competencies beyond the content-knowledge of a specific course. The link between learning objectives and assessment is also not formalised, as mentioned elsewhere in the report. The panel acknowledges that EBS recognises this weakness and is in the early stage of bringing together course objectives, assessment methods and assessment criteria [SER pg, 46, M].

Accepting credits from previous studies or work experience is well regulated and assessed and students have also failed to transfer credits when the link with their studies (reflection) is not convincing.

An appeal process is clearly regulated in the document ‘Academic Regulations’, and available to all students. Based on interviews at the site visit, students are not necessarily familiar with the rule, which is perhaps unsurprising if they have not had cause to submit an appeal. There was limited awareness that a procedure exists.

The assessment of final theses and exams takes place according to the Criteria for the Assessment of Theses. A clear grading rubric is in place for thesis grading; however, it seems that the document does not solve all problems. The SER points out in multiple places that “a unified and shared understanding of the final theses and nature of the examination (setup, requirements) and assessment criteria among faculty and students” is a point for improvement [SER, pg 46]. There are talks about a meta-form as an attempt to reduce variance across different graders [T]. The panel suggests that in addition alternative, communicative ways could be considered for this issue, such as regular sessions of blindly re-evaluating a set of selected theses, followed up by a discussion of differences in grading. There are clear guidelines for assessing the progress of PhD students. Their performance is evaluated yearly, based on their individual study plans.

Strengths

- Systematic initiatives to improve the transparency and quality of assessment at a course and programme level.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Introduce a comprehensive assessment plan per programme to test the link between learning objectives and assessment, as well as diversity of assessment.
- Increase collaboration and communication between different staff members to improve consistency in grading theses.

1.10 Learning support systems

Standard:

The higher education institution ensures that all students have access to academic, career and psychological counselling. Students' individual development and academic progress are monitored and supported.

Guidelines:

The HEI assists the student in developing an individual study programme based on the student's special needs as well as educational abilities and preferences.

The HEI advises its students (including students with special needs and international students) on finding practical training places as well as jobs. Students are aware of where to get support in the case of psychological problems.

The HEI has a functioning system to support and advise international students (including psychological and career counselling) which, inter alia, helps them integrate smoothly into the membership of the HEI and Estonian society. The HEI analyses the reasons students withdraw from studies or drop out, and takes steps to increase the effectiveness of the studies.

The HEI supports student participation in extra-curricular activities and civil society initiatives.

The HEI monitors student satisfaction with the counselling services provided and makes changes as needed.

Indicators:

- The average duration of the study by levels of study
- Dropout/withdrawal rate

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The panel found that the Academy has a broad range of appropriate support systems in place. These include Study Consultants, a Career Counsellor, embedded courses on the Development of Study Skills and a range extra-curricular programme. These support systems are subject to monitoring and review arrangements which include the use of data. **[SER, M, S, A]**

Significant emphasis is placed on the role of Study Consultants, who are students' first point of contact and highly valued by students. Study consultants work as a "one-stop-shop" for students, bridging administration silos that would be time-consuming to navigate, for issues related to timetables, course selection and registration as well as programme requirements, exchange programmes and exams. They also assist with scholarship schemes and personal and financial issues. Student consultants demonstrated a great deal of initiative, including when it came to direct their own induction. The panel did however consider that these highly committed staff would benefit from a more centralised programme of initial induction and ongoing training in order to ensure they maintain comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge that enables them to continue to support students. Where study consultants are unable to assist, support is provided by the Head of the Office of Academic Affairs. Although Study Consultants provide pastoral support, the institution themselves recognise that psychological counselling for students could be improved and it plans to recruit a part-time counsellor for the 2020/21 academic year. **[A, S, T, M]**

All programmes benefit from an embedded course focussing on the 'Development of Study Skills'. Despite this, some students referenced variable abilities within their cohorts, in part due to the international composition of the student body. International students do benefit from a buddying

system whereby second- and third-year students provide informal tutoring. Students can also join the International Club. Nevertheless, the panel found that the School could enhance induction and transition arrangements for international students.

EBS employ their own Career Counsellor and this is supplemented by referrals to career centres run by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. Students praise the School's entrepreneurial focus as a key institutional strength. However, students also felt that the introduction of a careers fair and formation of a department to support placements and internships would be beneficial. **[S, A]**

EBS has arrangements in place to support students declaring disabilities. However, this is reliant on students informing the institution about their requirements. Staff and student feedback indicate that support for students with special needs could be further enhanced. For instance, wheelchair users currently have to be carried to certain spaces within the building. The panel concluded that this had a detrimental effect on students' dignity and may prove a deterrent for some international students with mobility problems; where legislation requires the provision of accessible routes on campus. EBS would benefit from addressing this shortcoming to their physical space in the event that the new campus building is realised. The School may also benefit from developing a more proactive approach to eliciting the declaration of student disabilities. **[M, S, SER]**

The panel found evidence that EBS are responsive to student feedback. Examples of recent improvements include enhanced WiFi provision, additional power outlets in classrooms and a programme of campus renovation carried out in 2019; this included the provision of common working spaces. At the time of the visit further, extensive improvements were being made to the campus, including modernisation of teaching spaces and the creation of a reading room. The panel did find that some part-time students would welcome extended opening hours, for instance in relation to catering services, as they study during the evening.

EBS demonstrated to the panel that they are aware of internal and external challenges to retention. Trend data is actively monitored and where it is in their control, such as through the development of financial partnerships, they actively seek to mitigate risks.

The School benefits from an active Student Council, who receive a budget of 35,000 Euros. The Council operates a newspaper, investment club and marketing section among others which helps students to develop leadership and teamwork skills. The Student Council is also a recognised link between students and their concerns, and the leadership of the study programs.

Strengths

- The role of study consultants – acting as a “one-stop-shop” supporting students in academic planning and administrative issues (including for international students).

Opportunities for further improvement

- To closely follow students' new demands in terms of support services. This would imply providing dedicated training to study consultants, making their role increasingly anticipatory while endowing their job with new skills (beyond the ones acquired through learning-by-doing).
- Complete appointment of a permanent psychological counsellor
- The development of more robust support arrangements for students with disabilities

1.11 Research, development and/or other creative activity

Standard:

The higher education institution has defined its objectives and focus in the fields of RDC based on its mission, as well as on the expectations and future needs of society, and assesses their implementation and the societal impact of its RDC activities. RDC supports the process of teaching and learning at the higher education institution. Support services for RDC are purposeful and support implementation of the objectives of the core process.

Guidelines:

The HEI places a high value on the role and responsibilities of the field of RDC in society and evaluates the results of its RDC activities, their international visibility and societal impact.

The HEI responds flexibly to the current needs of society and the labour market in terms of its research and plans its research in collaboration with enterprises, public sector institutions and organisations of the third sector.

Members of teaching staff introduce students to their research results as well as the latest scientific achievements in their areas of specialisation, and involve students in their R&D projects where possible.

The organisation and management of RDC take into account thematic differences and the mission (profile) of the HEI.

Indicators depend on the specificities of the HEI:

- Numerical data: (1) scientific publications by classifiers; (2) public presentations of creative work; recognition from international competitions; reviews in professional publications, etc.; (3) patent applications, patents; (4) textbooks, study aids of various formats, etc.; (5) system development solutions; product development solutions; environmental applications solutions; (6) contracts concluded with enterprises; (7) spin-off companies, etc., in line with the profile and priorities of the HEI; etc.
- Number of scientific publications / creative works per member of academic staff and per employee with the requirement to do research (FTE, by areas)
- Number and volume of externally funded projects of RDC activities

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In recent years, and certainly since the previous institutional accreditation, EBS has made a strong effort to enhance its research and development activity, taking steady steps to bring it to the core of its mission. This is seen as positive and important for EBS' long term attractiveness and societal impact. EBS has set concrete goals in this domain, which have started to be monitored through a set of KPIs developed as per the recommendation of last accreditation. Those indicators and targets are explicit both in the Development Plan of EBS and in the SER, seeking to align and compare the progress of EBS with international standards and gradually "raise the bar" [T, M].

EBS has a relatively stable number of PhD theses defended every year, and the same is true of admissions to the doctoral programme – which has also been attracting international students. Simultaneously, the amount of external funding for research-related activity acquired by EBS also grew, adding up to slightly below €750.000 over the last five years (SER p. 50). Most of the projects

are development cooperation projects (e.g. Erasmus +), of an applied nature (e.g. for governmental organisations) in which some applied research component is involved. The SER (p. 52) mentions the participation of EBS in two projects supported by scientific research funding, which is not much, but focuses on contemporary and topical issues (gender equality, work-life balance, financial literacy). Beyond the participation in these projects, evidence suggests that the cooperation with other higher education institutions for research purposes has increased as well – e.g. through joint PhD (co)supervisions, international conference attendance, the organisation of international scientific events, and joint research publications. EBS needs to maintain this trajectory as success in attracting research funding in the short term would appear to rely on their collaboration with other institutions, as the School matures in its own right as a research institution.

The international publication output has been growing, albeit moderately. EBS has recently put in place a “publication policy” favouring high standard publications, with wide international circulation, which has impacted on the volume being produced. This is a medium-long term strategy whose results may take time to emerge, but the underlying principle is welcomed. Up until now, EBS reports publications in some well-respected outlets (e.g. Journal of Business Ethics, Academy of Management Learning and Education, Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Asia Pacific Journal of Management), but the majority of other reported publications still has limited reach in terms of scholarly readership. It should also be noticed that EBS has been closely monitoring its progress in this regard, in relation not only to national but also international standards (e.g. AJG ranking), which should be seen as good practice.

Recently, EBS took the initiative to organise its research activity into eight research groups, focused on themes of scientific and societal relevance. These groups have emerged organically around researchers’ specific interests and projects. As explained during the site visit, they aim, among others, to foster discussion, signal competences in relation to prospective doctoral students and apply to research funding [T, S]. Doctoral students and junior research fellows are involved in the activities of research groups and participate(d) in research and development projects – 13 projects with the involvement of PhD students – and even assumed leadership in one research group (on creative industries and smart cities).

The involvement and empowerment of doctoral students and young staff in the research and development activity of EBS is laudable. Yet, EBS should pay attention to assure that research groups combine dynamism with recognised scientific leadership and enough critical mass to make them relevant research cells – which is more important as one ambition is to institutionalise research discussion routines and apply to increasingly demanding funding sources. At this stage of development, while it is important to assure enough freedom to explore new research directions, EBS should avoid research group fragmentation and keep closely monitoring the progress of research activity within each group. At the same time, EBS should allow for eventual organisational re-adjustments along the way, which may include the creation, but also the eventual merging and dissolution of research groups.

Overall, despite the recent progress, EBS is aware that improvements are needed in the field of RDC, e.g. in terms of i) growing research and development project acquisition and improving project management skills in-house; ii) building reputation and networks; iii) enhancing scientific-related exchange and interaction among staff and iv) increasing the number of doctoral supervisors and the quality of the supervision process. EBS has been taking steps in that direction and is perhaps at a turning point where, beyond focusing on increasing the scale of research and development activity, it would be also relevant to keep discussing thematic foci and ways to assess societal impact beyond

scientific publication (e.g. building on the dissemination efforts that already take place, yet on a more ad-hoc basis).

In the EBS Development Plan 2019-2023, 1.12. it is stated that the target is to break down the work of the professional staff in three parts: one third dedicated to teaching, one third to “project activities with clients, including research and, finally, one third with “self-development, non-commissioned research, participation in university administration and representation of the university, etc.” It is concerning that the non-commissioned research is prioritised so low, and in the same category as administration **[T, M]**.

An important development at EBS concerns the involvement of junior research fellows and PhD students in teaching activities – which is very noticeable and well-documented in the SER and other materials made available to the review panel. This practice has an important potential to keep EBS programmes and courses up-to-date, and balance the practical, problem-solving nature of education at EBS with wider theoretical and conceptual dimensions.

There is evidence that research carried out at EBS has led already not only to international publications but started to support curriculum development as well **[T]**. Moreover, the publication of textbooks, popular science books and manuals is also an important indicator of the growing link between RDC and education and should be further developed. Yet, although these practices have been positively noticed in a number of courses, they do not seem to represent yet a widespread practice, calling for further articulation between EBS research groups and teaching departments. The recent recruitment of international faculty with research experience has much potential in this respect and should be incentivised further.

EBS has an organisational structure in place to oversee and implement research goals, including a Vice-Rector for Research (who is also in charge of the Doctoral Programme) and a Research Council, tasked with, among others, overseeing research directions, results and challenges ahead. There is evidence that these structures are operative in the coordination and support of research-related procedures and processes within the organisation.

Recently, EBS has put in place a wide set of incentives and a “motivational package” **[M, T]** to encourage and nudge RDC activity. Those include explicit and negotiated time packages for proposal development and publishing; support for conference attendance; specialised training for proposal writing; participation in workshops outside EBS, among others. New internal regulations and other sorts of normative guidelines have been put in place, including for instance, differentiated time allocations and research obligations among staff positions and career expectations; new hiring requirements; a publication policy rewarding excellence. Moreover, a relevant focus is also placed on monitoring results, and in spreading a culture of research ethics and peer-review – which is emphasised to doctoral students. Further attention is required to assess whether (and the extent to which) these regulations and research culture will become institutionalised in the organisation during the coming years.

At this point, there is no evidence of the existence of dedicated project management staff for research. However, if the scale of external funding and research activity is to increase in line with the targets, the need for these services will be increasingly felt. These may include a dedicated secretariat, as well as professional project management services and research communication to society.

Strengths

- The package of incentives to engage staff in RDC activity (e.g. concrete research time commitments; conference participation, professional development workshops), together with a publication policy and differentiated research requirements among staff positions.
- The empowerment of young staff with international experience in leadership positions and the involvement of doctoral students in research groups, projects and lecturing.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- Continue to develop its processes, systems and arrangements for research at the institution. To ensure that, among other relevant areas, EBS continues to progress in relation incentivising research and the research profile of its faculty, the balance between research and practice, the development of its research community and the level of funding it secures for this aspect of its work.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Beyond monitoring research outcomes, it would be important to develop routines for evaluating (and acting upon) processual issues as well. These include the organisational mechanisms designed to incentivise research at EBS, such as motivational packages and follow up of research groups. Additional incentives based on research group productivity could be considered.
- EBS should maintain its efforts to ensure a coherent link between their researchers and international research environments, incentivising high quality publication and involvement in EU research projects
- Strive to combine commissioned and competitive research in the intended work of staff, growing the role of the latter and ensuring this is explicitly reflected in the School's Development Plan
- To keep investing in creating an attractive environment for researchers and in hiring new staff with demonstrated research ability and international networks. Together with a "brown-bag" research seminar series, to organise a programme of high-level seminars with leading scholars, in selected fields in which EBS has distinctive expertise and wishes to excel.
- To develop mechanisms and innovative ways for involving older generations in RDC activity as well, preventing the widening of a generation gap.
- To ensure sufficiency of supervisors at the PhD level, possibly with contributions from external co-supervisors, articulating those relations with joint research, education and publishing projects. A joint PhD programme could be considered in the future.
- To ensure that the activities of research groups and teaching departments become increasingly connected (e.g. course lecturing, guest lecturing, thesis development).
- EBS should pay attention to assure that research groups combine dynamism with recognised scientific leadership and enough critical mass to make them relevant research cells

1.12 Service to society

Standard:

The higher education institution initiates and implements development activities, which enhance prosperity in the community and disseminate recent know-how in the areas of the institution's competence. The higher education institution, as a learning-oriented organisation, promotes lifelong learning in society and creates high-quality opportunities for that.

Guidelines:

The HEI contributes to the development of the community's well-being by sharing its resources (library, museums, sports facilities, etc.), by providing consulting and advisory services, and by organising concerts, exhibitions, shows, conferences, fairs and other events.

The HEI involves alumni in activities aimed at the development of the HEI and the knowledge society.

Employees of the HEI participate in the work of professional associations and in other community councils and decision-making bodies as experts, directing society's development processes as opinion leaders. The impact academic employees have on society is taken into account when evaluating their work.

The HEI has defined the objectives for in-service training and measures their implementation. In-service training is planned in accordance with the needs of target groups.

Indicators:

- Number of people in continuing training (and other privately financed open forms of study), number of lessons or ECTS per participant

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EBS documents a wide range of activities as service to society, the School is involved in organising different public events like: Estonian Economic Association Annual Conferences, Centre of Free Economic Thought public seminars; speaker events 2-3 times a year in collaboration with the US Embassy and the American Chamber of Commerce, etc. EBS disseminates know-how among others at conferences, business radio podcasts, public speaking events (EBS faculty presentations at seminars, conferences in Estonia and abroad). Interviews confirmed that EBS has an extensive network and they organise larger events together with their partners. Representatives of industry are in programme councils ensuring EBS gains valuable input on the content and operation of their courses. EBS plans at least one semester in advance as to which industry experts they utilise and for what purposes. [SER]

Based on the feedback of external stakeholders, EBS is initiating increasing entrepreneurship in society. EBS' adult education provision, the coaching programme, is well-known and appreciated in the society. Well established connections with society were also confirmed by students, who explained that EBS are holding events and understand what it takes to grow and maintain their network. On the other hand, stakeholders from Helsinki mentioned that EBS could be more involved in events and networks and the collaboration could be more formalised. [E, S]

The EBS Alumni Board is the network of almost 5,000 alumni and public and private organisations. It has been founded to reinforce collaboration between the School and Alumni by enabling joint discussions, increasing the role of alumni in the management of EBS and understanding the expectations of alumni when it comes to EBS' role in the development of their professional preparation. Interviews confirmed that the alumni representative group meets with the Board and the Management. The alumni board represents business owners, top managers, and experts from both private and public organisations. In addition, EBS issues an Alumni newsletter and EBS alumni also act as mentors and coaches in the MBA programme. Approximately 25% of all visiting and guest lecturers are EBS alumni. **[SER, A]**

During the discussions with alumni who were not part of the Alumni Board, it became evident that their involvement with EBS is comparatively limited. Alumni get invitations to alumni golf events, the EBS annual Gala and the aforementioned quarterly newsletter. It was advised by alumni that more formal networking events like mixers might be a good idea instead of dinners and other events where it can prove harder to talk to as many people and build your contact base. EBS could have more cooperation with private companies; researching real life problems could open the door to create extremely beneficial collaborations. **[A]**

Employees of EBS participate in the work of professional associations and in other decision-making bodies such as the Estonian Association of Employers; Enterprise Estonia; Statistics Estonia; Association of Entrepreneurial Women; Baltic Management Development Association; Estonian Human Resource Management Association; Chamber of Service Industry; Association of Marketing Agencies. Based on interviews, it appears that the activities are indeed valued and recognised by the faculty. EBS staff are also teaching courses and delivering lectures in high schools.

As a service to society, lifelong learning is promoted and delivered by EBS through EBS Open University. Lifelong learning offerings in continuing education consisting of either existing courses, modules, programmes or tailor-made solutions. The primary target groups for continuing education are executives and mid-level managers, specialists, public servants, alumni, and students from other universities. EBS offers free seats to bachelor's and master's classes, if there is space, and also to external people where they might be interested in a particular specialisation. The idea is that 100 extra students could be sitting with master's students, this will give extra value to classes. In lifelong learning there is a separate organisation (EBS Executive Education Centre) targeting CPD, executive and in-hour training. The objective of lifelong learning is defined in the EBS Development Plan, and the achievement of objectives is monitored on an annual basis. In addition, EBS operates an internship programme with the Association of Employers. **[M]**

The total number of open university students has been increasing over the years - from 83 (2014) to 186 (2019). Total Number of ECTS per academic year has increased from 424 (2014) to 745 (2019). There are 1005 learners trained and 4240 ECTS delivered throughout 2013-18, including training 215 teachers and mentors in the "Edu ja Tegu" programme from 2016-19. **[SER]**

Finally, EBS provides usage of its premises, including the library for seminars and public events. The arrangements help to involve society as a wider part of the School's community. However, the panel considered that more could be done in this regard. The institution could place greater emphasis on monitoring the wider societal impact of its research and professionalise its research dissemination functions, for instance by releasing more news items about its research on the website and in local media. They could also hold research events and conferences that are open to the public.

Strengths

- EBS' widespread involvement in societal and industry networks involving external stakeholders.

Opportunities for further improvement

- It is advisable to increase promotion of opportunities and activities to alumni in order to extract more value from the EBS network.
- Research dissemination functions could be gradually professionalised in order to ensure that a keen focus is maintained on the societal impact of research, beyond the number of publication and research projects, together with a focus on ways to assess the wide impact of RDC on the societies EBS serve.

2. Assessment findings of the sample of the study programmes

2.1. Entrepreneurship and Business Administration (BA)

The BA Entrepreneurship and Business Administration (BEB) programme is an organic part of the EBS programme portfolio. The School introduced the full-time BEB in 2007, delivered mainly in Estonian, with some courses in English.

The specialism is aimed at highly motivated and enterprising individuals from Estonia who wish to develop their knowledge and skills to establish their own company or to develop an enterprise they are already running. The programme also involves a substantive module in business administration. After completing their studies, according to the curriculum, the graduates develop an understanding of the different mechanisms within an economy and the functions of a business enterprise. Compared to major competitors, the programme is known for its practice oriented and innovative teaching, accompanied by strong corporate connections and a contemporary learning environment. [SER, 2020].

Student numbers of the study programme have been growing, year on year, from 360 in 2013/14 to 447 in 2018/19.

Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

The emphasis of the programme is to help prepare students seeking to develop a new business enterprise and to support those wishing to develop existing organisations. The School informed the accreditation panel that the rationale for the significant business administration element is that the entrepreneur is also a manager.

The programme has evolved over time from an evening course to its current full-time equivalent. EBS recognised the fast-paced development of the Estonian economy and the need, presented by increasing globalisation, for students to study in languages other than Estonian. Admission to the programme now requires the acquisition of high-level, business English.

Programme design, review and revision are regulated by the EBS Programme Statute. While the Senate holds ultimate responsibility for programme amendments, these are overseen by the Head of Bachelor's Studies and informed by the Council of Bachelor's Studies. Recent improvements to the programme have included the integration of three courses focused on research methods. These have been introduced to support students with production of the thesis. They have also included the introduction of a mobility window to the programme and enhancements to the admissions process.

Faculty use trend and labour market analyses to inform ongoing programme development. EBS reported to the panel during the site visit, that graduates from the programme perform better than their counterparts from comparable programmes at other Estonian institutions in relation to individual income. [M, T]

Faculty teaching on the programme have extensive professional networks which included, but were not limited to, Tallinn City Council, estates and branding companies and organisations providing support for start-ups. EBS also provided the panel with a range of examples demonstrating the research and scholarly activity of faculty teaching on the programme. The networks forged through these activities have helped EBS to develop collaborative projects with other universities in Estonia and abroad. EBS is also an active participant in a number of innovative projects involving industry partners, again on both a national and international basis, such as the project to launch and entrepreneurship competence centre at Ternopil Business School (TBS) (SER p.52, SER p.78)).

Strengths

- The extensive range of academic and industry collaborations which support programme planning and delivery

Opportunities for further improvement

- EBS plans to launch a new International Entrepreneurship Bachelor's programme, from autumn 2020, to attract more international faculty and students. It is important that this new initiative makes use of the faculty's existing network among practitioners in order to ensure the relevance to society of the new programme.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

The BEB is promoted through a variety of means and through diverse channels, notably online and through directed ads, but also by talks, seminars and high-school information, among others [SER]. Admission conditions are publicly available and regulated, and there is a professional administrative process in place. The admission process follows a clear standard and is personalised at the same time. An interview is conducted with every applicant, exploring objectives, ambitions and the fit between applicants' motivations and the programme propositions [SER, S]

EBS offers a soft-landing process for new students, with introductory sessions on the structure of the programme, specialisation options, as well as introductory courses on "studying skills" – which, among others, seek to prevent drop-out during the first semester [SER, T]. Students are personally supported by a study consultant, who is tasked with advising them during their studies; namely, in helping to design a study plan, among other administration and course-related issues. Evidence from the assessment visit suggests that BEB students value the personalised support, dedication and responsiveness provided by study consultants [S, A].

BEB runs on a full-time and part-time basis, with different learning regimes, in-class organisation and workload distributions. By doing so, the programme seeks to cater for different working patterns and work-life balance of professionals. BEB applies different types of teaching and learning methods, focusing on flipped classroom methodologies, among others, in an increasingly digital environment [SER, M]. Face-to-face classes had been the primary learning environment and are reported to be increasingly favoured for in-depth discussions, debates and some work assignments. Yet, the fast transition to digital environments (which preceded the recently imposed Covid-19 lockdown) suggests the digital readiness underlying the BEB programme is high overall. [R, M].

BEB operates under the School's evaluation and assessment guidelines, which are adapted at the level of each course and approved by the head of department. The academic staff abides by a code of conduct for running assessments and a number of steps have been taken to reduce and prevent academic fraud. Students' feedback is reported to be, in general, taken into consideration in re-designing and correcting mismatches (e.g. course workloads, assessment regimes) [SER, T]. This also

applies to external visiting faculty, whose contract renewal may rely on students' feedback. There is evidence of course redesign based on such feedback, and efforts to actively demonstrate to students that their voice is taken into consideration [T]. Yet, this seems to apply more pre-eminently to younger lecturing staff and a generation gap may be in place in the extent to which these practices are systematically followed [T, S].

The programme has considerable flexibility and offers different study tracks. Close attention is paid to upgrades in structure and programme organisation, with new modules being introduced in recent years (e.g. on research methods), the enhanced participation of researchers as lecturers, as well as new internship concepts [SER]. Moreover, BEB has created a specific mobility window, in which students are encouraged to study abroad. This is reported to be highly appreciated by students, in particular the large variety of universities they can choose from to continue their studies [S, A]. Yet, as BEB is offered in Estonian language only, there have been no incoming students from abroad.

Graduates from BEB have diverse types of careers and occupations, including a significant number of de facto entrepreneurs and self-employed graduates, along with the fulfilment of other relevant positions nationally and abroad [SER, A, E]. Alumni and employees attach value to the practical-oriented approaches and skills developed through the programme, the focus on concrete real-life cases and interactive modes of learning and engaging – which are deemed as essential in a course focused on entrepreneurship. Students benefit from informal access to career advice and job offers, but some consider that more formal and structured mechanisms on career advice and support would be appreciated. [S, A]

The University also informed the team about plans to welcome a start-up accelerator onto campus as part of the campus regeneration project that is currently underway. The panel recognised the potential of this project to support teaching and learning on the School's programmes and to further enhance relationships between EBS and their graduate community.

Strengths

- A well-positioned programme for the market with a good value proposition, benefiting from high demand and successful alumni as “programme ambassadors”.
- The applied and practical-oriented nature of the programme, as well as the flexibility enabled through by different study modes.
- Implementation of a new internship concept in the programme which appears to be relevant and pragmatic.
- The wide range of international exchange possibilities.
- An effective study support system that is highly appreciated by the students.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Maintain efforts to ensure that the practical orientation of the programme is not at the expense of conceptual rigour and updated content, strengthening the growing links between the programme and research at EBS.
- Consider the development of more formalised career advice and job offer platforms, alongside the informal support currently offered.

- Study innovative ways to increase inward mobility into the programme, overcoming the language barrier.
- Foster linkages between the programme and the start-up accelerator, soon to be established at EBS's premises, both for EBS students and staff (e.g. internships, mentoring, thesis development).

Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

In the BEB programme, courses are mostly designed and run by senior lecturers with PhD qualifications, together with industry practitioners, to bridge theory and practice. EBS has a good mix of academics and practitioners in its BEB faculty, as highlighted earlier in the report surrounding teaching faculty at the institutional level. The core faculty of EBS commonly has research, administrative, or consultancy obligations in addition to teaching.

During the period of 2016-18, 61% of the programme was delivered on average by the core faculty and 39% by the adjunct faculty. The number of faculty holding a PhD qualification is 34% of the twelve faculty members that are usually engaged in teaching in the programme per semester. EBS involves a considerable number of adjunct faculty, along with the core faculty, to achieve their strategic goals. During the site visit, this was clearly acknowledged and considered to be a good practice by the student body. [S]

In the last three years, the average student assessment of the courses has been between 5.9-6. (on a 7-point scale), which is slightly above the EBS expected minimum level (5.6). In general, this feedback appears to be good and comparable to master's programmes where a lot of effort was focussed on making improvements. However, it is difficult to know which course and which faculty members are rated exceptionally well or below the expected level. It is important to know of any poor performing lecturers and/or courses with less satisfactory feedback, in order to create an action plan to improve the student experience in such cases. Understandably, a higher feedback score is achieved by courses where theory is explicitly related to real-life business practice, and interactive teaching methods are applied. [SER]

As per the information provided in the SER, the quality of course design and clarity of assessment criteria in LMS Canvas vary a lot. More attention should be paid to the preferences of individual students from different backgrounds when delivering the courses. The panel could not get a satisfactory response on this issue and consider that programme management should find a way to ensure that they are not compromising on the structured curriculum while acknowledging the different learning styles of students. This might contribute to positive student feedback. **[SER]**

EBS has taken some initiative in promoting the international mobility of teaching staff. However, there is a need for more efforts in this regard as there has been no significant increase in teaching mobilities compared to the last few years and this is vital for the School' internationalisation ambitions. The BEB programme enjoys solid cooperation between employer representatives who participate in the design and implementation of the study programme (i.e. visiting faculty), and those who are involved in the admission and thesis review process. The teaching staff of the programme follow the principles of academic ethics, as mentioned under Standard 1.4, and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance by students.

EBS emphasises the continuous development of both permanent and visiting faculty and has established an on-going process in January 2020. The in-house approach to faculty development is based on many pertinent factors such as student feedback, results of an annual performance appraisal, analysis of syllabi, EPAS, other accreditation recommendations, and programme development needs. Concerning the teaching and research activities, EBS focuses on achieving a good balance and the research findings are directly used in the study process of the programme, improving both the content and methods of teaching.

Strengths

- The involvement of a substantial number of adjunct faculty, alongside the core faculty, has led to the high practical relevance of the programme. This was acknowledged by students during the site visit.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Encourage all faculty members to attend one-on-one training sessions with the support of a specialist to develop their courses on LMS Canvas and align the course set-up.
- Find more effective ways to balance structured programme content, different pedagogical approaches and learning styles.

2.2. International Business Administration (MA)

EBS created an ambitious International Business Administration MA programme in 2002 when the School recognised the need for specialised business executives in the Estonian labour market. The programme is therefore heavily centred on EBS' mission to be relevant, in particular, for the job market. It was originally designed as a one-year M.Sc. programme taught in Estonian but was subsequently re-designed into a two-year M.A. programme. In line with the ongoing internationalisation and globalisation of the labour market, EBS opened an English-language version in Tallinn in 2008, and expanded it to Helsinki in 2015. The full programme is taught in English to enable participation from foreign faculty and utilise the most up-to-date teaching knowledge and methodologies. The number of students studying at the MA programme has decreased from 249 in 2013/14 to 119 students in 2018/19. The share of international students is 44% and has increased significantly (up from 4% in 2013/14). The programme curriculum has been further adjusted in order to meet EBS' mission, for example the organisational management course has been converted to a human resources management course and in 2016/17 a new finance specialisation was introduced. [SER]

Planning and management of studies

- The design and development of study programme(s) take into account the expectations of students and other stakeholders, national strategies, legislation and trends in the particular area as well as labour market needs. The level and volume of RDC activities is sufficient and supports the launching of the study programme(s).
- The objectives of study programme(s), modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies. The study programmes support the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies.
- The administration of material and financial resources that ensure the design and implementation of the study programme(s) is purposeful, systematic and sustainable. The learning environment, including materials, tools and technology support the students in achieving their learning outcomes.

The structural unit responsible for the IBA programme at EBS spans three departments: Department of Management, Department of Marketing and Communication and Department of Finance and Economics in combination with the Methods Lab. This broad institutional foundation mirrors the aim of the programme, which is to provide the students with a combination of general business knowledge and in-depth expertise in a specialisation. **[Appendix 4.2.: Intrapreneurship & Entrepreneurship, Management in the Digital Era, Data Management, Financial Value for Public and Private Companies, Strategic Management]**

Another ambition of EBS' is to provide relevant and practice-oriented teaching. The IBA programme has thus been adjusted and reformed several times since the foundation in 2002. It is notable that international faculty has been engaged in the redesign of the modules: in 2016-17 the finance specialisation was altered with the assistance of Harri Seppänen (Financial Analyst, Finland) and John Playle (Oxford Brookes University), in 2016 professor Bernadette Kamleitner (WU Vienna) participated in the creation of the 6 ECTS course "Consumer Behaviour and Critical Management" and in 2017 Dr.

Tabani Ndlovu (Nottingham Business School) developed the 6 ECTS course “International Marketing and Performance Measure”.

These reforms were based on feedback from alumni and organisations, student feedback as well as internal audits. It is very positive to assess how EBS have responded to such internal and external feedback. At the same time is concerning that “... the number of students giving feedback to the overall programme has been quite low” as it is stated in SER (p. 60). Action was taken in 2018 when the head of the programme approached the student representatives directly and at the same time an advisory board meeting dedicated to the IBA programme was initiated. It could be helpful if EBS could consistently address responses to the low feedback rate rather than these positive but ad hoc instances.

The IBA programme is built on the principle “from broad to narrow” using specialisation to narrow the focus of unpinning created through core course (appendix 4.4.). This structure and the course content of specialisation and electives seems logical. It is the ambition of EBS that IBA programme is recognised as an internationally leading version in its field. In order to achieve the ambition EBS will combine high academic quality, continuous feedback and the allocation of enough resources, including new and improved campus facilities. An important aspect of these improvements concerns environmental sustainability on campus. EBS has already emphasised the need to avoid unnecessary printing and the consequent emphasis on e-learning. These initiatives could - and should - be enhanced, for instance through the signing and compliance of the UN Global Compact initiative.

Strengths

- It is notable the EBS has used international expertise in the development of the programme including researchers from WU in Vienna, Nottingham Business School and Oxford Brookes University.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Set up an advisory board which can support a continuous assessment of the relevance of the programme curriculum.

Learning, teaching and assessment

- Conditions and organisation of admission ensure fair access to education and motivated student body. Students' choice of specialisation is supported.
- A student-centred approach is used in the studies, aiming at the students to assume responsibility for planning their studies and career and supporting the development of key competencies and achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Student assessment, including taking accreditation of prior and experiential learning into account, supports the students and corresponds to the learning outcomes. Objective and reliable assessment is ensured.
- The organisation of studies including practical work and training is based on the specificities of students and forms of study and supports the student in achieving the learning outcomes. Opportunities have been established for mobility within Estonia and internationally.
- Support services for students are in place and available for students. Individual development and progress of students are monitored and supported.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in terms of their knowledge and social skills both nationally and internationally.

Admission criteria are openly available and transparent. Next to formal qualifications, the programme uses interviews for admitting students. Based on the SER and talks with the alumni, there appeared to have been a problem of the heterogeneity in prior knowledge, language skills and motivation of students, which particularly expressed itself in group work. Based on similar interviews with current students, this issue now seems to have been resolved.

The programme seems to make a major effort in adapting to individual student needs. For example, there are three dates set in order to pass an exam; there is also some choice between courses. It seems that the full-time employment of most students has a major effect on the programme, setting a limit of extracurricular activities and study abroad. The programme has made a well-reasoned choice against internships as part of its structure and encourages Erasmus+ internships to those who wish to engage in mobility. There are certain aspects of internationalisation that are less developed. Outgoing student mobility is very low [SER pg 64], and probably an indication that existing opportunities do not correspond well to the needs of the current student population. EBS might need a proactive strategy to address this challenge. An important recommendation is thus to define other means of international learning opportunities, beyond traditional student mobility pathways. It could be suggested that all IBA students should have at least one such opportunity during their studies and these could be defined broadly as an international short-term course, online exchange, international internship, or other similar opportunity

The students' profile has an understandable effect on their study progress, particularly in the thesis writing phase. The programme has adjusted the thesis process to split the ECTS into coursework and final thesis. EBS might consider whether further structuring of the process might help particular student groups in completing the project quicker. Collaboration with students has also led to research output and students electing to pursue PhD studies. There is a good link with the practice in the content and work formats of the courses.

The quality of a course and the teacher seems to be a priority in the quality cycle **[T, M]**. Interestingly, it appears that students themselves can demand a change of the instructor and in case 60% of students demand such a change this will be acted upon **[SER, pg 64]**. It is clear that students' evaluations are taken seriously, and student concerns are addressed directly, as well as via Student Council and by the programme head. There seems to be some cooperation about assessment methods and attempts to link assessment to learning objectives. **[T]** The programme head collects information on course objectives and assessment, although there might be a need to further effort to coordinate assessment between different teachers.

Strengths

- The practical focus on the programme, which accurately reflects students' expectations and links well to their needs after graduation. Furthermore, good progress has been made, in a short time, to make use of the local network and this is also in Helsinki.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Develop an internationalisation strategy for the programme that accommodates the needs of the particular student population, looking towards other, less traditional, opportunities, for student mobility - i.e. short courses, exchange of virtual electives etc.

Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

- Teaching is conducted by a sufficient number of professionally competent members of the teaching staff who support the development of the students.
- Teaching staff follows the principles of academic ethics and the codes of conduct in case of non-compliance.
- Members of the teaching staff participate in international mobility programs which encourage the development of their teaching and RDC activities and the cultural openness of the HEI and the Estonian society.
- The effectiveness of both studies and RDC activities, students' feedback, the effectiveness of supervision, development of teaching and supervision skills, international mobility and entrepreneurial or work experience in the specific field outside the HEI is taken into consideration in evaluating the work of the member of the staff.

The qualifications, teaching and supervision skills of the faculty is critical for the IBA programme. In order to achieve and sustain the necessary standards there are two fundamental requirements. Firstly, EBS needs to recruit and develop the right (international) faculty. Secondly, the courses and the academic content needs to be evaluated and appropriate actions need to be taken in response to these evaluations.

The faculty on the IBA programme consists of 27 faculty members, of which 13 hold a PHD degree and 14 of them are core faculty. Adjunct faculty (of which there are 13) are industry practitioners (e.g. from banks, consultancies, research agencies and legal businesses). It is positive that around 80% of the faculty have teaching experiences abroad. As mentioned under Standard 1.6, it is concerning that only 50% of the faculty possess a doctoral degree. It would be an important ambition to increase this number to at least 75% percent within 2-3 years.

Four of the adjunct lecturers teach at international universities. At the site visit representatives from this group confirmed a very positive impression of EBS and the programme overall. Including widespread and sufficient administrative support, and an informal peer-to-peer relationship with the core faculty.

Student feedback on this EBS programme is clearly taken seriously. In 2017/18 the feedback collected from students was relatively negative. In response, a number of initiatives were taken at the time including removal of courses and specific lecturers. The result was an average assessment of 5.8 in 2018-19 (SER, p. 66). It is positive that EBS responded to negative evaluation and implemented measures to change courses, including courses content and lecturers. At the same time the panel determined that it would be beneficial for EBS to provide more consistent opportunities for continuous learning of the faculty, based on the outcomes of quality assurance processes. The IBA programme, and EBS overall, would be strengthened with the establishment of a "Teach and Learn", or equivalent, unit which could provide tailored courses for the lecturers in pedagogical skills, curriculum development, language, IT and other matters.

Strengths

- The IBA programme has a solid faculty base with a complimentary mixture of core faculty, business practitioners and international scholars.
- International focus of the teaching staff.

- The responsiveness of programme management to negative student evaluations