

Zuyd Hogeschool

Bachelor International Business

Limited study programme assessment

Summary

In November 2019 the bachelor study programme International Business of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Zuyd IB) in Maastricht was visited by an audit panel from NQA. In addition to a four-year full-time programme, Zuyd IB offers also a three-year full-time programme for students with a *VWO* or pre-university equivalent diploma. The programme is taught in English. The audit panel assesses the quality of the study programme as **positive**.

Standard 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1.

The Zuyd IB study programme has a clear and comprehensive set of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) as set out in the national *Framework International Business of 2017*. The PLOs meet the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that they are at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level. All of the PLOs have to be accomplished at the highest level, level 3, except for the second foreign language and for three of the following themes: Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People. For these themes students can choose which one they want to accomplish at level 3. This enables them to distinguish themselves sufficiently in the work field, according to the panel. The PLOs are in accordance with the professional orientation of the programme, which is, according to the panel, carefully considered and up-to-date. With its generalist focus, it suits the rapidly changing international business world. The panel recommends adding one or more PLOs geared to the specific aspects of the Euregion, since many IB students enter this part of the business world after graduation. Finally, the work field was structurally involved in formulating the learning outcomes, on an international, a national and regional level, and is still involved in the continuous review of them. To this end the programme actively maintains a wide range of contacts with the (international) business world across various sectors.

Standard 2: Teaching-Learning Environment

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 2.

Based on the present implementation of the new curriculum and the plans for year 3 and 4 of the new curriculum, the panel is of the opinion that the study programme enables students to achieve the learning outcomes. The PLOs are well covered by the curriculum. The curriculum offers students a sound, well-balanced theoretical and practical basis for their future careers. The study programme has a strong real-life practical orientation, with Business Challenges in each block from block 1 in year 1 onwards. It is a clearly international programme, fully taught in English. All content is linked to international business. Students spend at least one semester abroad. Research skills get proper attention in the curriculum. This also holds for the subjects of Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS). There are various opportunities for students to follow individual learning paths: by selecting a particular *Intercultural Business Line*, shaping their internships, the choice of minors or by following an exchange or double degree programme.

The panel supports the choice of the HILL didactical approach, because it is clearly student-centred and practice oriented and fits in well with the goals of the programme. The study programme has well thought through this concept in all its aspects. It has invested substantially in the proper implementation of this concept and is constantly monitoring and if necessary, will

adjust the implementation. Attention should be paid to inform students adequately about what the didactical approach entails and what it requires from them. Conducting the right expectation management is crucial in this regard. The new didactical concept requires more smaller workspaces for individual students and project groups, of which there are not enough yet.

The Zuyd IB team of lecturers is dedicated and well qualified. The team is self reflective, eager and open to new challenges. The staff expertise covers the contents of the curriculum. Students generally judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help them. They are also positive regarding the input of the lecturers from their own experience in the work field.

Standard 3: Student Assessment

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 3.

The study programme has adopted an assessment policy which is well thought through and is aligned with its PLOs. The overall quality of the assessments is good. This holds for both the old and the new curriculum. The grading of the exams and assessments is insightful. The panel has established that in the new programme the assessments have clearly become more integrative. Striking a fair balance between assessing individual efforts and group efforts is still a challenge, especially in integrated assessments. Students judge the assessment system and the various assessments positively. This also holds for the feedback they get for the assessments. The panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessment. Important elements of the quality assurance are the comprehensive Test dossier, the 'BKE-qualification' of most lecturers and the consistent application of the four-eyes principle. The relevant bodies dealing with quality assurance of assessment – the Examination Board, Exam Control Committee and Graduation Committee - are very knowledgeable, they take up their responsibilities and roles very conscientiously and are pro-active.

Standard 4: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 4.

This conclusion is mainly based on the old curriculum, since there are no graduates yet of the new curriculum. However, for the conclusion on the achieved learning outcomes the panel has also taken into the account the present elements of the new curriculum and the plans for years 3 and 4 of the new curriculum. On the basis of its curriculum, the design of the graduation phase and the results of the graduates, the study programme demonstrates that the students achieve the intended outcomes. On the basis of what the panel knows about the new curriculum, it clearly expects that this will also hold for the future. The graduation products (internship and thesis) meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that all the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The panel is positive about the combination of a graduation internship with a thesis, which helps to ensure that all learning outcomes can be assessed in a proper way, like the professional skills in the internship. The subjects of the theses have a clear international business focus. The grading of them is insightful and well motivated. The panel is of the opinion that the methodological foundation can be further improved. Most theses have the same methodological format. The panel advocates more flexibility in this respect. The panel recommends Zuyd IB to re-think the form of the graduation phase and advocates more freedom for the students in order to make the graduation products more practice-based and to allow for more creativity and more excellence. Alumni are positive about the link between the programme

and their jobs. The programme also turns out to be a good preparation for a master's programme. The professional field is very positive about the level of the IB graduates.

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Introduction

This is the assessment report of the bachelor study programme International Business of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Zuyd IB) in Maastricht. The assessment was conducted by an audit panel compiled by Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) commissioned by Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. Prior to the assessment process the audit panel was approved by NVAO.

In this report NQA gives account of its findings, considerations and conclusions. The assessment was undertaken according to the *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* of NVAO (September 2018) and the *NQA Guideline 2019 for Limited Programme Assessment*.

The site visit took place on 26 November 2019.

The audit panel consisted of:

Drs. D.J.N.M. (Nies) Rijnders (chair)

J.J.J.W.G. (Jurgen) Moors MA PGDip (domain expert)

Mr. Dr. B.F.W. (Bart) Wernaart (domain expert)

K.R.Y. (Kim) Boerhout (student member)

Drs. M. (Mark) Fokkema, NQA-auditor, acted as secretary of the panel.

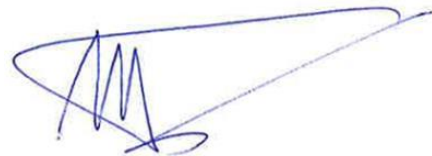
The study programme offered a critical reflection; form and content according to the requirements of the appropriate NVAO assessment. The audit panel studied the critical reflection and visited the study programme. The critical reflection and all other (oral and written) information have enabled the panel to reach a deliberate judgement.

The panel declares that the assessment of the study programme was carried out independently.

Utrecht, 25 March 2020



Drs. D.J.N.M. (Nies) Rijnders
Panel chair



Drs. M. (Mark) Fokkema
Panel secretary

Characteristic Features of the Study Programme

The full-time International Business Bachelor programme of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Zuyd IB) is located in Maastricht. At the time of the site visit the Zuyd IB had about 700 students with an inflow of 190 students for the 2019-2020 academic year. About 29% of the students is non-Dutch, representing 25 different nationalities. Zuyd IB offers a four-year programme and a three-year programme, the latter for students with a *VWO* or pre-university equivalent diploma. In the three-year programme, the first two years are compressed into one year.

The IB study programme of Zuyd is the first IB study programme at a Dutch University of Applied Sciences (UAS). It is the result of the merger in 2009 of two study programmes at Zuyd UAS: International Business and Languages (IBL) and International Business and Management Studies (IBMS). The location of the study programme in the tri-border region of South Limburg, the so-called Meuse-Rhine Euregion, is particularly suitable for the IB Students. It serves as their first contact with the international work field and as a stepping stone to the wider world. In 2019 the IB Zuyd obtained the EPAS accreditation (the Programme Accreditation System of EFMD - European Foundation for Management Development).

In November 2017 the newly formed National Platform International Business, in which Zuyd IB plays an active role, decided to use “International Business” as the new name for all the former IBL and IBMS programmes in The Netherlands to stress the international character of the programmes and to indicate their wide perspective. The panel regards this name as self-evident. The platform published the national *Framework International Business* with a set of 24 IB Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs). These PLOs form the basis for all IB programmes in The Netherlands.

The Zuyd IB study programme is undergoing a major transition to a new curriculum. As a result of major changes in the professional field regarding the nature and level of the skills required of IB graduates, high drop-out rates in year one and low bachelor yields, the study programme decided to re-examine and ultimately redesign its curriculum in 2017. This redesign was also triggered by the PLOs of the new national *Framework International Business* of 2017. The new curriculum was introduced in September 2018 for the first-year students of the 2018-2019 academic year. The previous curriculum is gradually phased out. In co-creation with the work field, alumni, partner universities, students and colleagues from Zuyd and Zuyd’s research centres, the study programme developed a new curriculum with a renewed focus on transferable 21st-century skills, like intercultural communication, cooperation, creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving. The curriculum became more reflective of the real-world, fast changing, international work environment of the IB professional. Zuyd IB’s goal is to make its programme truly student-centred. As the didactic concept for the revised curriculum Zuyd IB has adopted Filip Dochy’s model of *High Impact Learning that Lasts* (HILL), because, according to the study programme, this model suits the new student-centred curriculum best.

In addition to changing the curriculum, the study programme has also carried out the recommendations of the previous accreditation in 2012. The exam cycle has been improved by including test matrices. By adopting the HILL-model, the didactical concept has been made more explicit. Furthermore, research skills have been better integrated in the programme throughout the four course years.

Zuyd IB is proud of its strong practical focus and good cooperation with the business world. Furthermore, it prides itself on the depth and reach of the international content of the programme. This also holds for the percentage of foreign students (29%). The present focus points for the study programme include maintaining the standards of the curriculum which is being phased out while implementing the new curriculum, the high drop-out rates and the low bachelor yields. In addition, the study programme wants to fully integrate the subjects of Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) in its curriculum. Further professionalization of the teaching staff with respect to the HILL-model is another focus point. Zuyd IB also wants to establish structural ties with alumni. With the new curriculum, the study programme hopes to attract students and teachers from an even wider range of countries and backgrounds. The study programme's main concerns for the near future are the question whether new students are unconvinced by the new didactic concept, which they may view as unconventional, and the predicted decline in the youth population.

Basic Data of the Study Programme

CROHO study programme name	International Business
Orientation and level	HBO; Bachelor
Degree	Bachelor of Business Administration
Number of study credits	240
Graduation specialisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Management - Strategic Marketing - International Finance - Supply Chain Management
Location	Maastricht
Language of instruction	English
Variant	Full-time
CROHO registration number	30029

<i>Administrative institutional data</i>	
<i>Name institute</i>	Zuyd University of Applied Sciences
<i>Data institutional contactperson</i>	A.A.B. (Angelique) Cieremans
<i>E-mail address for copy of application</i>	angelique.cieremans@zuyd.nl
<i>Status institute</i>	Funded
<i>Result institute audit</i>	Passed, valid until 25 April 2022

Assessment of NVAO-Standards

Standard 1 Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1.

The Zuyd IB study programme has a clear and comprehensive set of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) as set out in the national *Framework International Business* of 2017. The PLOs meet the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that they are at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level. All of the PLOs have to be accomplished at the highest level, level 3, except for the second foreign language and for three of the following themes: Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People. For these themes students can choose which one they want to accomplish at level 3. This enables them to distinguish themselves sufficiently in the work field, according to the panel. The PLOs are in accordance with the professional orientation of the programme, which is, according to the panel, carefully considered and up-to-date. With its generalist focus, it suits the rapidly changing international business world. The panel recommends adding one or more PLOs geared to the specific aspects of the Euregion, since many IB students enter this part of the business world after graduation. Finally, the work field was structurally involved in formulating the learning outcomes, on an international, a national and regional level, and is still involved in the continuous review of them. To this end the programme actively maintains a wide range of contacts with the (international) business world across various sectors.

Justification

Professional orientation

Zuyd IB regards its graduates as “entrepreneurial professionals with a global mind, with broad basic knowledge of business but who are capable of researching, developing and implementing custom-made solutions for any challenge a business might face, and are able to help these businesses to achieve ambitious goals on an international scale. They are digital citizens who are able to gather and interpret data and translate this into practical actions that will help companies solve operational problems and stay ahead of the competition. They are reflective practitioners who, at all times, will be critical, flexible, creative and looking to innovate. IB graduates use their intercultural communication skills to establish cooperation between people, cultures, companies and disciplines. They are the fuel that drives sustainable growth”. Furthermore, they are capable of operating in a broad range of international business contexts and can manage the ever changing demands of the global business environment.

The panel supports the professional orientation of the study programme, especially because of its generalist focus, which according to the panel suits the rapidly changing international business

world. At the same time, the professional orientation leaves enough room for specialization. The orientation is carefully considered and up-to-date. Its focus on the long-term success of businesses, competitiveness, innovation, intercultural competencies, digitalization and sustainability is particularly appreciated by the panel. This also holds for the fact that the practical and operational aspects of international business are also clearly incorporated in the professional orientation of the study programme.

Final qualifications

The intended learning outcomes of the IB Zuyd are derived from the national *Framework International Business 2017* of the National Platform International Business. The national IB framework consists of 24 Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs), clustered in the following four domains with related themes:

1. Ways of Thinking: Critical Thinking, Innovation and Creativity, International Business Awareness
2. Ways of Working: International Business Communication, Collaboration, Management of Information as a digital citizen
3. Living in the World: Personal & Professional Development, Ethical & Social Responsibility, Intercultural Proficiency
4. Tools for Working and Management: Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management, Organisation & People, Business Research.

The implementation of the new PLOs was a relatively seamless process for Zuyd IB, since, according to the study programme, they align well with the competences of the former curriculum, partly because Zuyd IB is the IB frontrunner at hbo level, being the result of the merger of the IBL and IBMS programmes of Zuyd in 2009. The other IBL and IBMS programmes in The Netherlands only followed this development in 2018.

Based on the Bulthuis AuCom model of 2011, three phase levels of competence students go through have been attributed to the PLOs. Following the national framework, the IB programmes can differentiate themselves from one another on the required competence level of the PLOs. All the PLOs should be accomplished at level 3, except for the second language and for three of the four themes of the Tools for Working and Management domain. At least one of the following themes, Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People should be accomplished at level 3. Students at Zuyd IB can decide themselves which of these themes they want to accomplish at level 3. For all Zuyd IB students it is obligatory to accomplish the theme Business Research at level 3.

The national framework is structured according to the KSAVE model – Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Values and Ethics. This ensures that the IB programme meets the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that the national framework is at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level.

The PLOs form a clear and comprehensive set of competences, according to the panel. They fit the professional orientation of the study programme and correspond with the level of a professional bachelor. The panel is of the opinion that it makes sense that students can decide themselves which of the themes Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply

Chain Management and Organisation & People, they want to accomplish at level 3. This enables them to distinguish themselves sufficiently in the work field. The requirement to incorporate second language training for all students, except for those who follow the Asian line, has the full support of the panel, since second language proficiency is important in international business and it enhances the international career options of graduates. The panel has established that Zuyd IB closely follows the set of PLOs of the national framework. It recommends adding one or more PLOs geared to the specific aspects of the Euregion, as many IB students enter this part of the business world after graduation.

Tuning with the work field

The panel is impressed with the way the study programme involves the work field in establishing the PLOs and keeping them up-to-date and involving the work field in the design and contents of the curriculum. Moreover, the work field is also actively involved in the actual delivery of the curriculum, see also Standard 2. The PLOs of the national framework have been established in cooperation with the (inter)national work field. Zuyd IB has also consulted the regional work field in this process. On the basis of the reports of the work field advisory board and talks with some of its members, the panel concludes that this board is actively involved with Zuyd IB and has a relevant, diverse composition. Zuyd IB has many formal and informal contacts with the work field. Students, for instance, do internships and graduation projects in the work field and the work field provides various guest lectures enriching the programme with up-to-date knowledge from the business world. At the same time, most lecturers have recent experience in the work field or are still active in the work field. Furthermore, the cooperation with the Zuyd research centres (lectoraten), membership of professional bodies and attendance by lecturers of professional conferences and other meetings contribute to a solid network in which the professional world is increasingly intertwined with the study programme. Within this context the study programme could, according to the panel, give more exposure to existing collaboration with partner universities.

Standard 2 Teaching – Learning Environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 2.

Based on the present implementation of the new curriculum and the plans for year 3 and 4 of the new curriculum, the panel is of the opinion that the study programme enables students to achieve the learning outcomes. The PLOs are well covered by the curriculum. The curriculum offers students a sound, well-balanced theoretical and practical basis for their future careers. The study programme has a strong real-life practical orientation, with Business Challenges in each block from block 1 in year 1 onwards. It is a clearly international programme, fully taught in English. All content is linked to international business. Students spend at least one semester abroad. Research skills get proper attention in the curriculum. This also holds for the subjects of Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS). There are various opportunities for students to follow individual learning paths: by selecting a particular *Intercultural Business Line*, shaping their internships, the choice of minors or by following an exchange or double degree programme.

The panel supports the choice of the HILL didactical approach, because it is clearly student-centred and practice oriented and fits in well with the goals of the programme. The study programme has well thought through this concept in all its aspects. It has invested substantially in the proper implementation of this concept and is constantly monitoring and if necessary, will adjust the implementation. Attention should be paid to inform students adequately about what the didactical approach entails and what it requires from them. Conducting the right expectation management is crucial in this regard. The new didactical concept requires more smaller workspaces for individual students and project groups, of which there are not enough yet.

The Zuyd IB team of lecturers is dedicated and well qualified. The team is self reflective, eager and open to new challenges. The staff expertise covers the contents of the curriculum. Students generally judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help them. They are also positive regarding the input of the lecturers from their own experience in the work field.

Justification

Didactical approach

As mentioned above, Zuyd IB has adopted the HILL didactical approach, which aims at increasing the students' ability to apply and integrate the knowledge, skills and attitude they learn. An important aspect of this approach is that students, lecturers and professionals from the work field learn together. At the beginning of each block the students are confronted with a sense of urgency, a 'gap', or problem (UGP) as a real-life international Business Challenge. To solve this, they must cooperate with fellow students, lecturers and the work field. They work in groups of four students, supported by a coach. Knowledge is offered 'just in time', at the moment there is an

obvious connection to the case. Relevant skills are acquired in specific training sessions and by integrating them in dealing with the Business Challenge. In this approach the coaching role of the teaching staff has become more prominent.

The panel is very positive about the HILL didactical concept, especially because it is strongly student centred and practice oriented. According to the panel, it suits the education of the type of professionals the study programme aims at: entrepreneurial, innovative and reflective practitioners. It fits in well with the requirements of the business world, in which problem solving is essential. Furthermore, it helps to trigger self-management among students and responsibility for their learning process. Through reflection and (peer) feedback, which are important elements of the HILL model, students gain confidence in their own capabilities. The panel has established that the study programme has well thought through this model in all its aspects. The panel compliments Zuyd IB with adopting this model, which, although it can be seen as a logical next step after the previous theme-based approach, involves major changes for both students and lecturers. Zuyd IB has seriously and bravely taken on this challenge and is constantly monitoring and when necessary, adjusting the implementation of HILL.

According to the student reports of the Self-assessment report, the first student evaluations and the students the panel spoke with, the panel has drawn the conclusion that the students are generally enthusiastic about the new didactical model, mainly because of its strong practical orientation. However, students have underlined that the communication about this approach could be improved, especially to get new students on board, who generally are used to more traditional didactics. The panel agrees with the students on this and so does the study programme as it has turned out, since it has already improved the information about the didactics for the new students of 2019-2020. The new didactical concept requires more smaller workspaces for individual students and project groups, of which there are not enough yet, according to the students.

Structure and content of the curriculum

Since the old curriculum of 2009 is gradually being phased out, below the panel will mainly focus on the new curriculum, of which the implementation was started in 2018-2019. The panel has studied the new curriculum of the first two years and the plan for year 3 and 4.

The panel is of the opinion that the curriculum has a strong practical orientation, with real-life Business Challenges in every block, starting in the first block in year 1. Students get a sound practical and theoretical basis for their future careers as international business professionals. These aspects are properly balanced in the curriculum. The PLOs are well covered by the curriculum. The curriculum has a clear international focus. Research skills are sufficiently addressed in the curriculum. The panel draws this conclusion on the basis of several documents (the blueprint of the new curriculum, the descriptions of the educational units and the curriculum matrix) and the interviews the panel had with students, teaching staff, alumni and professionals from the work field. Students are also positive about the curriculum, especially about its practical orientation and its truly international character.

Zuyd IB has divided the contents of the curriculum in three competence levels, following Bloom's taxonomy and the Aucom model regarding the level of supervision and complexity. The PLOs

have been broken down into Module Learning Outcomes (MLOs), which are included in the curriculum matrix to ensure that all the PLOs are met at the appropriate level.

The curriculum has the following structure. The first two years provide the students with a foundation programme, including all relevant IB aspects. In the last two years students have more opportunities for specialization and distinction.

Year 4 Start level 2: competent Final level 3: independent/complex	Block 1-2 Integrated business challenge 30 EC ✓ Group assignment ✓ Students from different specializations (interdisciplinary) working at one business challenge		Block 3 -4 Business challenge 30 EC ✓ Individual ✓ International business (research) setting ✓ Thesis writing and internship	
	International Marketing & Sales			
	International Finance & Accounting			
	International Operations and SCM			
	International Organisation & People			
International Entrepreneurship				
Year 3 Start level 1-2: competent Final level 2-3: partly independent/medium complex	Block 1-2 Exchange 30 EC or, Internship abroad 30 EC		Block 3 - 4 Internship abroad 30 EC or Minor/Premaster 2x15 EC	
Year 2 internship competent Final level 2: less supervision, less easy)	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
	International Business Strategy	International Business Sales	International Business SCM - process	International Business Consultancy
	International Business challenge 10 EC Personal professional development, Business challenge (including business expertise/knowledge)			
	Intercultural business 5 EC Intercultural business & Communication & Business English			
Year 1 propeduse competent Final level 1: supervision, easy)	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
	Experience International Business	Expand International Business	Organize the International Business Chain	Create International Business
	International Business Challenge 5EC Personal professional development & Business challenge			
	Knowledge & skills 5EC Theory & Business English			
	Intercultural Business 5EC Intercultural business & Communication			
French	German	Spanish	Dutch	Asia

Business Challenges and Learning Lines

The Business Challenges and the Learning Lines are the main components of the curriculum. In each block in the first two years a Business Challenge from an internationally operating company is the starting point of learning. With each Business Challenge students go through the research or problem-solving loop and deal with ERS-related issues. They have to identify the problem, choose the proper research methodology, gather and interpret data and translate the results into practical solutions. The Business Challenges encompass a whole-task approach and can be seen as an integrated whole. Students will need a combination of knowledge (for example marketing, but also finance or logistics) and skills (for example cooperation, intercultural cooperation and IT skills) to sort out the sense of urgency, 'gap' or problem (UGP). The tasks include problem-solving, reasoning, procedural tasks and other professional activities. As stated above, knowledge is offered 'just in time'. Students are stimulated and guided to find the best theory or model to solve the Business Challenge. In the first year the study programme offers students a list of prescribed study materials, so that students can obtain the basics of international Business theory. In this year there are also specific lectures about specific subjects. Knowledge is also offered online and through consultation of coaches and expert lecturers. Coaches also organize flash lectures if they notice students have several questions concerning a particular subject.

Several Learning Lines are a key part of the programme in every single block of all four course years. There are five *Intercultural Business Lines*, each focused on a major cultural-linguistic segment of the world population or geographical region. At the start of the programme, students select a geographical region in Spanish, French, German, Dutch (for non-native speakers) or Asian culture. They follow their chosen line throughout all four years and work on their communication skills to reach the B2 level of the chosen language, except for the Asian line, which is a non-linguistic line. These lines provide students with the general skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to become interculturally competent. They are also trained in the specific language (except for Asia) and socio-cultural understanding required to work in or with their chosen region. In the Asian line, students focus on the intercultural aspects of doing business in Asia. With this regional specialization, Zuyd IB wants to give students a strong profile, in combination with a general international and intercultural basis.

Personal and Professional Development (PPD) is important because of the high degree of independence and maturity required from students. Every student has an individual PPD coach who offers them personal guidance throughout the four course years. The PPD coach has individual meetings with students and organizes workshops with them. Through this coaching students develop skills needed to take charge of their personal development. In year two the IB Student Community is part of PPD and plays a role in fostering the students' cooperation skills and professional attitude. Students have to actively contribute to the Zuyd IB community by working on projects serving the broader IB programme, like open days.

Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) form an integral component of the curriculum. The HILL approach in itself is designed to support the development of personal responsibility for one's own actions and learning. In the Business Challenges Zuyd IB forces its students to confront and debate these issues as part of their standard approach to any business case. Also ERS is incorporated in the Intercultural Business Lines, as their purpose is to ensure that students can

respectfully and effectively collaborate with different cultures and understand the challenges and concerns of regions beyond their own.

Research skills and critical thinking skills are vital for IB students. From the first block onwards these skills are trained and applied in the problem-solving approaches needed for each Business Challenge. This also holds for the internships and the final thesis. In the Research and ERS Learning lines the study programme closely cooperates with the newly created research centre Sustainable International Business at Zuyd and the research centre International Relationship Management.

Years 3 and 4

In the curriculum of years 3 and 4 of both the old and new curriculum, students have sufficient opportunities for specialization and distinction, according to the panel. Students are also positive about the options for specialization and distinction. In the third year, in both curricula, students will do an internship abroad for one semester in an international company, for which they will also do a small-scale research assignment. The aim of this internship is to put the knowledge and skills in the first years into practice and experience how it is to work in a foreign business environment. Moreover, students further develop their language and intercultural skills. In the other semester students can do a study exchange at one of the 70 partner universities of Zuyd or a Double Degree programme with one of the partners of Zuyd in Bordeaux/Marseille (France), Bogotá (Columbia) or Liège (Belgium). Students can also choose to follow a minor at Zuyd or at another UAS in The Netherlands. There is also the possibility to do a Pre-Master programme in connection with Maastricht University.

In the first semester of year 4 in the new curriculum students choose one of the four specialisation courses focusing on one of the Tools for Working and Management (see also Standard 1): Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management or Organisation & People. In the old curriculum the specialisations are: Strategic Management, Strategic Marketing, International Finance and Supply Chain Management. For the graduation phase, see Standard 4.

Language

The programme is fully taught in English and all lecturers must have mastered the English Language at CEFR level C1. The study programme presents the following reasons for using English as the teaching language. The programme prepares students for the international labour market for which they need international and intercultural skills. It is aiming for an international teaching and learning environment of which an internationally and interculturally diverse student and staff population are crucial elements. Furthermore, the object of study and the targeted professional field are intrinsically international. For the same reasons the panel fully agrees with this choice for English as the teaching language.

Staff

The Zuyd IB team consists of 32 lecturers (about 26 fte). The study programme is supported by staff who are engaged with internships, exchange, PR and marketing, planning and quality assurance. Almost all lectures have a master degree; four lecturers a PhD and two lecturers are following a PhD track. The aim is to have 30% PhDs within the team. Many lecturers are still active in the work field or have been so in the recent past, are involved in executive education,

are members of a relevant professional association or are involved in practice-oriented research. Most lecturers have international experience and continue to add to this via engagement with partner universities abroad, guidance of international internships, attendance of international conferences and guest teaching. In conformance with its HR policy, Zuyd IB has a good balance between staff focused on lecturing, research or practice, respectively 40%, 30% and 30%. The practice component consists of lecturers who are also entrepreneurs in the work field. Zuyd IB invests strongly in the professionalization of the team, focusing on the following areas: using the HILL-model, assessment (BKE and SKE), strengthening professional culture and research skills. In addition to this, the study programme ensures that all lecturers have at least didactical skills, ICT skills, English language skills (C1 or higher) and intercultural competences.

The panel has met a passionate, dedicated and well-qualified team of lecturers with a great team spirit. The team is self reflective, eager and open to new challenges. The expertise of the staff covers the contents of the curriculum. The staff has a lot of confidence in the management. The panel is impressed by the training facilities for staff members and opportunities for further development. The lecturers are also positive about this. The involvement of lecturers in research groups and centres of expertise is favourable for the further improvement of the contents of the curriculum, keeping it up-to-date and strengthening the research component of the curriculum. Students judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help them. They are also positive about the input of the lecturers from their experience in the international work field. The PPD coaches are highly valued by the students.

Standard 3 Student Assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 3.

The study programme has adopted an assessment policy which is well thought through and is aligned with its PLOs. The overall quality of the assessments is good. This holds for both the old and the new curriculum. The grading of the exams and assessments is insightful. The panel has established that in the new programme the assessments have clearly become more integrative. Striking a fair balance between assessing individual efforts and group efforts is still a challenge, especially in integrated assessments. Students judge the assessment system and the various assessments positively. This also holds for the feedback they get for the assessments. The panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessment. Important elements of the quality assurance are the comprehensive Test dossier, the 'BKE-qualification' of most lecturers and the consistent application of the four-eyes principle. The relevant bodies dealing with quality assurance of assessment – the Examination Board, Exam Control Committee and Graduation Committee - are very knowledgeable, they take up their responsibilities and roles very conscientiously and are pro-active.

Justification

Assessment policy and its execution

The primary purpose of assessment within Zuyd IB is to determine the student's progress as a means of monitoring whether the final competences/PLOs have been achieved. Assessment in the new curriculum is based on the 'whole-task approach'. Greater emphasis is placed on assessing students in terms of how they solve real-life problems with a view to evaluating their knowledge, skills and attitudes as an integrated whole. Consequently, the study programme has consolidated subjects previously tested separately into a limited set of integrated assessment modules. In addition to being demonstrative of competences achieved, assessment is also a means through which students can evaluate and adjust their own learning strategies. The insights gained through assessments should help students to identify gaps in their understanding and encourage them to determine the next step in their learning process.

IB offers a mix of assessment forms, mainly individual, but some are group assessments. Most assessments are integrative. The Business Challenge is a group effort and is assessed in the form of a written report, together with verbal or visual presentations for which a collective grade is given. Business English speaking and writing skills are also assessed via this product. The Business Challenge is also linked to individual theory tests, testing the student's basic knowledge of the theory addressed in a given block. Furthermore, it is linked to the individual Personal and Professional Development assignment, a portfolio showing soft-skills development. Intercultural assignments take the form of a group product (report, video or presentation) or individual assignments. The Communication component of the International Business Line is integrated in

the intercultural assignments, but also assessed individually via oral and written language exams at the end of each block.

The panel has studied a representative selection of written assessments and the related assessment forms, from both the old and new curriculum. According to the panel, the assessments meet the standards of bachelor assessments and meet the requirements of validity, reliability and transparency. The grading is insightful, according to the panel. The panel has established that in the new programme the assessments have clearly become more integrative. The panel has noticed that striking a fair balance between assessing individual efforts and group efforts is still a challenge, especially in integrated assessments and it is pleased that the study programme acknowledges this challenge. Students judge the assessment system and the various assessments positively. They are positive about the information about the assessment procedures and assessment criteria. This also holds for the feedback they get for the assessments.

Quality assurance of assessment

The panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessment within Zuyd IB. The quality assessment procedures of Zuyd IB include the appointment of qualified examiners, training of the assessors, setting guidelines for assessment and the four-eyes principle for the construction of exams and for the assessment of the Business Challenges, portfolio assessments and the assessment of the thesis. At the time of the audit most lecturers were 'BKE-certified' or were in the process of finishing the BKE-training (in total 25), three lecturers were 'SKE-certified' and one was doing the 'SKE-training'.

There is a clear division of tasks and responsibilities of the bodies involved in quality assurance. The Exam Board has the task assigned by law to safeguard the quality of exams, to appoint examiners and to establish whether a student can be awarded a degree. The Exam Board has mandated the Exam Control Committee (ECC) to check and monitor the examination level. The study programme uses a thorough quality assurance process for the exams, according to the panel. The fundament of this is the test dossier of each test. This includes the test matrix, answer keys, information on standardization, check lists exam cycle and exam development and, submitted after the exam period, samples of one pass and one fail exam. Via the test dossiers the ECC also checks whether the four-eyes principle has been duly applied in the test creation. The panel has checked several of these test dossiers and was impressed by their quality. The ECC also provides tools for quantitative and qualitative test analyses, assesses the learning function of the tests and provides feedback on the basis of this when needed.

As to monitoring the quality of the thesis and the final internship, the Exam Board cooperates closely with the Graduation Committee. The Graduation Committee checks and takes care that the quality standards set by Zuyd IB in relation to the thesis and the graduation internship are met accordingly. This committee consists of the internship/thesis coordinators. The chair discusses regularly the quality of the graduation project with the Exam Board. To check and safeguard the end work matches the BBA level, the Exam Board itself organises end-level sessions with external experts of other Dutch Universities of Applied Sciences, members of the work field community and members of Zuyd's research centres.

Based on the reports of the Exam Board and the meeting with members of the Exam Board, the Exam Control Committee and the Graduation Committee, the panel is of the opinion that these bodies take up their responsibilities and perform their tasks conscientiously. The panel is also of the opinion that Zuyd IB has put in place a good quality assurance system for the end level of the programme

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 4.

This conclusion is mainly based on the old curriculum, since there are no graduates yet of the new curriculum. However, for the conclusion on the achieved learning outcomes the panel has also taken into the account the present elements of the new curriculum and the plans for years 3 and 4 of the new curriculum. On the basis of its curriculum, the design of the graduation phase and the results of the graduates, the study programme demonstrates that the students achieve the intended outcomes. On the basis of what the panel knows about the new curriculum, it clearly expects that this will also hold for the future. The graduation products (internship and thesis) meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that all the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The panel is positive about the combination of a graduation internship with a thesis, which helps to ensure that all learning outcomes can be assessed in a proper way, like the professional skills in the internship. The subjects of the theses have a clear international business focus. The grading of them is insightful and well motivated. The panel is of the opinion that the methodological foundation can be further improved. Most theses have the same methodological format. The panel advocates more flexibility in this respect. The panel recommends Zuyd IB to re-think the form of the graduation phase and advocates more freedom for the students in order to make the graduation products more practice-based and to allow for more creativity and more excellence. Alumni are positive about the link between the programme and their jobs. The programme also turns out to be a good preparation for a master's programme. The professional field is very positive about the level of the IB graduates.

Justification

Graduation process

The final part of the Zuyd IB programme is a combination of a final internship and a research assignment. As an intern at an internationally oriented company, the student independently writes a bachelor's thesis. The thesis focuses on a research question from the professional world which ties in with the student's specialisation and contributes to his/her professional development. The competences of the specialisation are assessed at level 3. The panel has established that the graduation process and regulations are laid down in a clear and comprehensive *Graduation Guide*.

During the internship, the Zuyd IB internship supervisor is in regular contact with the student and the internship company. If this company is in the vicinity of Maastricht, the company is visited twice by the supervisor, at the beginning and at the end of the internship, to discuss the student's performance. Otherwise, the supervisor has frequent digital/skype contacts with the internship company. The student is also coached by a company supervisor. For writing the thesis, the student is coached by a Zuyd IB supervisor. The coaching is on the initiative of the student.

The student earns 30 ECs for the graduation internship: 15 ECs with a mark for the work activities for the company and 15 ECs with a mark for the thesis; both marks have to be pass marks. During the internship there are two moments of formal evaluation, one mid-term and one at the end. For these assessments the company supervisor fills in assessment forms and the outcome of these assessments is discussed among the internship company, the IB supervisor and the student. This leads to an advice to the IB supervisor, who is responsible for the final grade.

In order to guarantee objectivity in the assessment of the thesis, the roles of supervisor and examiner are separate. The assessment is carried out by two examiners, one internal examiner (a ZuydIB staff member) and an external assessor (non-IB). Both of them hold a Master's degree or higher, are trained in the assessment of the graduation examination and participate in thesis calibration sessions. The assessment of the thesis has two stages. Four to six weeks after the start of the graduation project students submit their research proposal to the examiner and assessor for a formative Go/No Go verdict. At the end the internal examiner and the external assessor first assess the thesis separately, each filling in their own assessment form. In final Go/No Go sessions the final grade is determined. In case of doubt or disagreement, a third assessor is involved. This goes for theses that may or may not be a pass and for these that could be considered excellent.

According to the panel, the study programme has designed a proper graduation process with clear go/no go moments and adequate guidance and marking procedures, with a clear separation of guidance and assessment. The panel is positive about the combination of a graduation internship with a thesis, which helps to ensure that all learning outcomes can be assessed in a proper way, like the professional skills in the internship. Also alumni judge the graduation process positively.

The panel has studied 15 theses of students who graduated in the last two years, together with the related assessment forms. These theses meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. As to the theses, the panel assessed all of them as satisfactory. The panel found the grading insightful with proper accompanying feedback. The subject matter of the theses is in accordance with the international business scope of the study programme. The panel is of the opinion that the methodological foundation can be further improved. It seems that most students follow strictly the same methodological format. Therefore, the panel would like to recommend more flexibility in this respect. The panel recommends Zuyd IB to re-think the form of the graduation project and advocates more freedom for the students in order to make the graduation products more practice-based and to allow for more creativity and more excellence. As it has turned out, Zuyd IB is already thinking along these lines for the graduation phase of the new curriculum.

Functioning of alumni in the work field

Recent surveys among alumni show that the alumni are satisfied with the programme. This was also confirmed by the alumni the panel met. The Zuyd IB programme offers appropriate preparation for the international labour market. The unemployment rate is low; graduates find a job shortly after graduation, at an appropriate level. Alumni are satisfied with the link between the programme and their job. About 33 – 42% of the graduates continue studying abroad or in The Netherlands, usually at a Master's programme. Alumni who took up master's programmes believe

that the Zuyd IB bachelor's programme offers a good preparation for a master's programme. Company surveys and feedback of external advisers show that the professional field is satisfied with the level of the Zuyd IB graduates. The representatives of the work field the panel interviewed, were also positive about the Zuyd IB graduates.

Final Conclusion regarding the Study Programme

<i>Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 2 Teaching – Learning Environment</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 3 Student Assessment</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic quality standard

The bachelor study programme International Business of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences meets the basic quality norms of all standards in the assessment framework. The judgements have been weighed according to the NVAO rules for decision making. Based on the positive quality of the four standards assessed, the panel is positive in its final conclusion with regard to the study programme as a whole. The panel was especially positive about the new curriculum and the new didactical approach the study programme is implementing, because they help to make the study programme even more practice oriented. The study programme has bravely and seriously, and so far successfully, taken up the challenge of this implementation. The study programme is truly international. It is also fortunate with a passionate, dedicated and highly qualified team of lecturers. The study programme as a whole can be characterized as open minded, reflective, honest and open to change.

The audit visit panel judges the quality of the existing hbo bachelor study programme International Business of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences as **positive**.

Recommendations

General

- Give more exposure to the fact that the study programme has been EPAS accredited.

Standard 1

- Add one or more PLOs geared to the specific aspects of the Euregion.
- Use the unique Euregional profile as one of the USPs of the study programme.

Standard 2

- Improve the information for students as to what the didactical approach entails and what it requires from them.
- Establish more smaller work spaces for students.

Standard 3

- Dedicate thorough attention to the process of assessing the students' individual performance in group assignments/team work.

Standard 4

- Introduce more freedom and flexibility in the form of the graduation products in order to make them more practice-based and to allow for more creativity and more excellence.

Part III

Appendices

1. Programme of the site visit

VISIT SCHEDULE

Name of the institution: Zuyd University of Applied Sciences

Name of the programme: International Business

Date of visit: Tuesday 26th November 2019

All meetings take place in room BRB11 (except student panel)

8.30 – 8.45 Introduction of programme in Br.B.11

<i>Programme Director International Business</i>
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<i>Programme Director International Business</i>
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8.45 – 10.00 Preparation by panel

10.00 - 10.30 Blue jeans (online) meeting with member of the IB work field advisory board and IB alumnus

<i>Business & Technology Delivery Manager at Accenture, Work Field Advisory Board</i>

<i>IB alumnus (graduated 2019). Hugo Boss. Assignment provider Business Challenge 1.1</i>

10.30 – 11.15 Meeting with students (in IB workspace BR303)

<i>Year 1</i>

<i>Year 1</i>

<i>Year 1, three year track</i>

<i>Year 2</i>

<i>Year 2</i>

<i>Year 2, study participation council</i>
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<i>Year 4 student, chair study participation council, Strategic marketing specialization</i>
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<i>Year 4 student, Finance specialization</i>

<i>Year 4 student, Supply Chain Management specialization</i>

11.30 – 12.15 Meeting with IB teaching staff

<i>Lecturer Spanish and intercultural communication</i>

<i>Lecturer in marketing, coach in 3 year track, Academy council, Marketing graduation project coordinator</i>
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<i>Lecturer English, Personal Professional development coach</i>
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<i>Lecturer Marketing, curriculum committee, Business challenge coach</i>

<i>Lecturer in Finance and Management, Business challenge coach, Personal Professional development coach</i>
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<i>Lecturer SCM/specialization and graduation coordinator SCM</i>

<i>Personal professional development/Lecturer Law and Management</i>
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<i>Lecturer entrepreneurship and coordinator 3 year track</i>

12.15 – 12.45 lunch

12.45 – 13.30 Meeting with committees (Examboard, exam control committee, curriculum committee, graduation committee)

<i>Coordinator Strategic Management Specialisation, Chair Graduation Committee, Curriculum Development, lecturer Marketing</i>
<i>Chair Exam Board, Lecturer Law and Management</i>
<i>Chair Exam Control Committee, Lecturer Intercultural Business and Spanish</i>
<i>Chair Curriculum Committee, Coordinator block 1.1, Lecturer English</i>

13.45 – 14.30 Meeting with IB alumni and work field

<i>IB alumnus (graduated 2011). Work field advisory board. FB4.</i>
<i>IB alumnus (graduated 2014). DHL.</i>
<i>IB alumnus (graduated 2017). Beleidsadviseur GGZ (Trainee Menzis) Master Erasmus Rotterdam.</i>
<i>IB alumnus (graduated 2019). Master at Maastricht University.</i>
<i>Work field representative. 2nd external assessor theses. APG.</i>
<i>Work field advisory board. Stamicarbon.</i>

14.45 – 15.15 Meeting with Programme management of International Business

<i>Programme Director International Business</i>
<i>Programme Director International Business</i>

15.15 – 15.45 Blue jeans (online) meeting with students in Colombia/Ireland

<i>Year 3 – via Bluejeans, writer student report, double degree Colombia</i>
<i>Year 3 – via Bluejeans, writer student report, academy council Double degree Colombia</i>
<i>Year 3 – via Bluejeans, writer student report</i>

15.45 – 16.30 Meeting about development issues with regard to research centre Sustainable International Business

<i>Programme Director International Business</i>
<i>Programme Director International Business</i>
<i>Research coordinator of research centre Sustainable International Business (as of 1st September 2019)</i>

16.30 – 16.50 Open office hour

16.50 – 17.50 Evaluation by panel

17.50 – 18.05 Feedback session

2. Documents Examined

- Self assessment report International Business
- Overzicht IB team including work experience and BKE – SKE
- EPAS Self-Assessment Report International Business Zuyd
- Framework International Business
- The professional profile of International Business (IB), Zuyd University of Applied Sciences 2018-2019
- OER International Business
- Didactical approach International Business V2.0 2019-2020
- International Business – Curriculum 2009 and 2018
- Competentiematrix IB 2019
- Double Degree Agreements with partner universities
- Facultair scholingsplan Faculteit International Business and Communication 2017-2019
- Scholingsplan International Business 2019-2021
- Jaarverslag examencommissie 2017-2018 International Business
- Jaarverslag examncommissie 2018-2019 International Business
- Graduation Guide International Business year 4 2019-2020
- Selection of 15 theses 2017-2019
- Representative selection of assessments and related assessment forms