



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Kauno technologijos universiteto  
**TARPTAUTINIO VERSLO PROGRAMOS (621N12004)**  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (621N12004)**  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Kaunas University of Technology

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Master's programme in International Business at Kaunas Technical University is one such programme at this level within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Faculty was established as the Faculty of Administration in 1990, and became the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2000. Over 2,500 Bachelor, Master and Vocational students are enrolled in the Faculty, attending full-time, evening, and extra-mural studies programmes. The programme in International Business is delivered and managed by the Department of Strategic Management which is also responsible for other study programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 1. Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

In the self-evaluation review conducted by the University prior to the site visit by the expert panel, the programme aims and associated learning outcomes are summarised as follows:

“The *concept* of the Programme rests mainly on the classical approaches used in most University Business Schools all around the world. *We seek that the graduates have comprehensive knowledge in management, economics and other social sciences, are able to apply it in non-typical, real-life situations, understand the international business environments, conceive and employ the modern management theories and international practices in decision making, are able to prepare and implement strategic plans for business development in international markets, develop a modern organization to survive in a knowledge-based economy, and have skills to exploit the possibilities of information communication technologies, to organize and implement continuous learning.*”

While it is the stated intention of the University to produce graduates who are competitive in international business and labour markets, particular attention is paid to ensuring their suitability for employment in the Lithuanian economy where, according to the self-evaluation review, 99.3% of all businesses are SMEs with less than 250 employees. The University also states that it is resisting pressure from employers to shift from a University to a practical-level education.

The stated objective of the Master's in International Business programme is "to prepare innovative and strategy minded entrepreneurs able to create internationally successful business organisations and to manage them by applying the most advanced management methods and tools." In working towards the achievement of this goal, the programme has been structured carefully to provide an integrated and systematic approach to business and management education at an advanced level..

In order to reflect this focus, the English wording of some learning outcomes could be strengthened further to confirm more accurately, in printed format, the high-level approach and underlying philosophy behind the programme. The nature, level and extent of the learning outcomes was summarised verbally in discussions between with University's academic management, lecturing and administration staff and the panel members on the occasion of the site visit to the University, which took place on 28 February, 2013. While the distinctions between this Master's qualification and a Bachelor degree were explained clearly to the panel, the extent of the difference in levels is not always fully apparent from reading the programme documentation.

The fact that the University's Department of Strategic Management has made "a significant contribution" to the development of the Strategy for National Progress, "Lithuania 2030", reinforces both the credibility of the curriculum and the expertise of the staff associated with its design, implementation and review.. The innovative approach which has been a key feature of development in recent years has helped to ensure that the title of the programme, its learning outcomes, the content, and the qualification offered are compatible with each other.

The learning outcomes are expansive and relate to the following 5 main areas:

- ▲ Knowledge and its Application
- ▲ Research Skills
- ▲ Subject-Specific Skills
- ▲ Social Skills
- ▲ Personal Skills.

The ability "to harmonise business development with the principles of sustainable development," as listed on page 9 of the self-evaluation review, represents an example of the social responsibility dimension the programme.

The partnership which the University has undertaken with SDA Bocconi and Roskilde University in developing the EMBA is highly commendable, and relevant to the focus of the curriculum.

## **2. Curriculum Design**

The programme structure contains 8 core modules, 24 elective modules and the final degree project or thesis. Worthy of particular mention is the introduction of some distinctive elements into the curriculum, such as the inclusion of courses/subjects in Value (Business Model) Innovation, Business Intelligence, and Knowledge Management.

In the context of further improvement, there appears to be a certain commonality in the naming of subjects across the curriculum e.g.

- ⤴ Strategic Management v. International Management v. Modern Management of Organisation.
- ⤴ Marketing Management v. Strategic Marketing Management v. International Marketing.
- ⤴ Service Management v. Service Quality Management.

This similarity in terminology is proposed for further review, as is the extent to which some subject titles seem to be identical to those which can appear on a Bachelor degree programme in the field of higher education. In order to enhance the national and international status of the programme, it is important to ensure that there is no possible ambiguity regarding the nature and level of each course/ subject within the curriculum.

The programme is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the content relates to the most recent trends in business and management, while also taking into account social, economic and political changes in the environment. The fact that the University hosts three national research excellence centres, plus its involvement in the development of E-learning technologies, helps to facilitate this updating process and to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the qualification.

Particular attention is paid to what is referred to by the University as the final degree project ( incidentally, the panel understands that the word 'thesis' is a more commonly used term to

describe this research assignment at Master's level). The emphasis within the project is on the solution of real business-related problems or issues. The final marks allocated to this work show an average score in excess of 9 out of 10 for both academic years, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. This result is overgenerous, based upon the panel's assessment of the quality of the sample projects which were inspected. It is also somewhat unusual to assign such high marks at this level, particularly when international comparisons are made. The outcome could lead to an adverse perception regarding standards.

From a review of the programme, the panel has identified aspects which should be revisited by management:

- ▲ Currently, the possibility exists for a student to graduate with the Master's qualification without having taken the module in Finance Management and/or Managerial Accounting. Although Finance may have been studied at undergraduate level, this area should also be mandatory in the Master's programme, with the syllabus having an international business and management emphasis.
- ▲ There appears to be duplication of certain topics within courses/subjects. Such repetition needs to be justified in all instances. For example, the content of the Enterprise Management syllabus seems to overlap with that of the Production Management syllabus. There are also references to 'the learning organisation', 'change management' etc. across different syllabi.
- ▲ It is essential that the book stock listed as essential reading for students is available in the library and is kept up to date. Many of the prescribed textbooks supporting the curriculum are dated in the 1990s, with no reference to more recent or advanced editions of such publications. This deficit can reflect on the quality of the final projects, where some research sources identified by students are seen to accord with the 'official' listing of printed material rather than the most recent editions or, alternatively, the latest publications by other authors and experts in the particular discipline.

- ⤴ A somewhat more expansive syllabus could be provided for certain subjects/courses e.g. 'Consumer Behaviour'; while the inclusion of 'Advertising' as a distinct module within the curriculum may require further consideration.
- ⤴ It is understood that the same curriculum applies to both full-time and EMBA students, although they are taught separately using a somewhat different emphasis and approach. However, the panel suggests that it would be advisable to reflect this reality by introducing appropriate variations into the printed programme details to reflect how the different learning needs of both student groups are met in practice.
- ⤴ A wider and deeper coverage of EU matters related to business development, analysis and management should be included in the programme. While business ethics is covered within the curriculum, this aspect could be made more explicit in the learning outcomes and also, as appropriate, in curriculum content.

### **3. Teaching Staff**

The majority of the teaching staff come from the Department of Strategic Management which consists of 4 professors, 5 associate professors and 6 lecturers. A total of 7 professors and 5 associate professors are currently involved in the delivery of the programme. Some other associate professors, together with doctoral students and graduates, assist the professors and help in providing seminars. The allocation of these high-level academic staff to deliver the programme reinforces the emphasis which is placed by the Faculty and the Department on providing a quality programme.

The research ethos within the Department of Strategic Management is impressive, with more than 40 research projects having been completed over the past 10 years. The national importance of some of this research work is also seen as highly significant. The quantity of staff publications produced over the same period is also significant and worthy of further encouragement.

Feedback from students regarding the performance of teaching staff helps to inform the Department regarding the effectiveness of the different approaches being used in programme delivery. Of concern to the University, however, is the fact that some less experienced teachers



do not avail of opportunities being provided to enhance their pedagogical skills. It is understood that this issue is receiving ongoing attention.

Other suggestions for further improvements include:

- ▲ The necessity to ensure that teaching quality is not adversely affected by the big amount of academic hours and broad involvement of key professors in research projects. The likelihood of this happening would seem to be increased by the number of teaching staff who are actively engaged in consultancy and other extra-university work. While involvement in such activities can help in terms of keeping up to date, an appropriate time balance must prevail to ensure that service quality to the individual student is not affected.
- ▲ The involvement of more visiting lecturers (national and international), together with a stronger input from experienced business executives, and social partners generally, would further enrich the delivery of this programme.

#### **4. Facilities and Learning Resources**

An appropriate physical infrastructure has been provided for programme delivery.

In terms of learning resources, scope exists for the introduction of additional new computers and an expansion and updating of library stock (as mentioned above). Student and staff access to electronic databases is also available in their own homes, via the VPN network. The volume of subscribed and tested databases is regularly expanded and updated.

An increase in library opening hours, both later in the evening and over the weekend, is highly desirable, should resources permit. An extension of the existing level of cooperation with other national and international libraries is also to be encouraged.

Facilities for communication between academic staff and students are readily provided. However, consultations regarding the final project/thesis could be allocated additional time and emphasis in order to improve the quality of such work.

The focus on using international case studies within the programme is recognised, and the panel suggests that students might be encouraged to produce more case studies as an element of their project work. An expanded use of the Moodle system across the different courses/subjects is also seen as advisable.

## **5. Study Process and Student Assessment**

The work of the Study Programme Committee in constantly reviewing programme aims and learning outcomes helps to ensure that attention is paid to the study process and the related student assessment dimension. It is understood that alumni and social partners provide valuable assistance in this regard, as do members of the Confederation of Industrialists in Lithuania and other external stakeholders.

Admission to the programme is conducted in accordance with all legal requirements and complies with University policy. According to the self-evaluation review, the decrease in the number of students selecting this programme as their first priority may be explained by the radical increase of a number of study programmes in the field of business and management both at KTU and other Universities. It is encouraging to note, however, that the number of applications received in 2011-2012 exceeded that of each of the two previous academic years.

The nature and structure of the assessment process for the programme resembles in many ways the system in place for a Bachelor degree. This is regarded by the panel as not being particularly appropriate, and the approach should be refined. A fuller distinction between the two systems could be developed. At this level, fewer assessment tests should be employed, with each assignment demanding a greater depth of answering/analysis/synthesis from the student. An enhanced usage of integrated assignments requiring strong creative and innovative solutions/thinking across, as well as within, courses/subjects is suggested as a further worthwhile refinement.

In certain countries within the European Union, it is normal practice to involve external examiners from other Universities (both national and international) in the conduct of the examination process. This approach can be beneficial for the University and for the staff associated with programme delivery, while the allocation of a greater weighting to final

examinations, than is the case in KTU, represents another distinguishing feature of programmes at this level in certain countries.

The emphasis placed by the University on student research leading to presentations at conferences and also publications has been highlighted in the self-evaluation document. Efforts to promote student mobility under the auspices of the Erasmus scheme have also been noted by the panel, although it is understood that the encouragement provided for students in this regard has met with only limited success. The record of graduates in gaining employment, often at an advanced level, combined with the fact that some are already working on commencement of the programme suggests that there is no particularly strong incentive for students to transfer to a foreign country for study purposes.

Areas of concern to the Department which have been identified by staff include:

•Bureaucracy and constant changes in study process organisation requirements take too much time from the teachers and the Department; •a decreasing level of motivation on the part of students; and •the necessity to grant more authority to coordinators of the programme. It is understood that the debate on these matters is ongoing.

Also of interest to the panel is how the performance of students is graded, as compared with other Master's programmes internationally where it is exceptional for a student at this level to obtain maximum marks for a thesis/project. However, it is accepted that the current assessment process corresponds with the system applied across Lithuanian Universities.

In the overall context of assessment, the University's ongoing efforts to combat and eliminate plagiarism are worthy of maximum encouragement and support.

## **6. Programme Management**

The management of the programme complies with relevant legislation and University regulations. The Study Programme Committee plays a key role in all aspects of programme management where, as indicated above, the decision-making process also involves input from alumni and social partners. The process of administration and of quality assurance is mediated, since 2003, through the virtual Oracle environment, and the panel understands that the

University places a strong emphasis on quality assurance and management in the design, delivery, management and review of this programme.

In essence, the programme is assessed on a regular basis, both within the Department and by the Faculty. In order to enhance overall quality, the Department of Strategic Management has signed collaboration contracts with external stakeholders. A high level of commitment and goodwill towards this qualification and the University was evident in the discussions which the panel held with student representatives, alumni and social partner representatives on the occasion of the site visit. As already mentioned, feedback from students helps to inform programme management about suggestions and ideas for further improvement.

Amongst the challenges for the programme is the increased level of competition from specialised study programmes at Master's level and, as mentioned above, the fact that some students do not apply themselves with sufficient diligence in order to fulfil their potential.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ⤴ The emphasis on an innovative approach to curriculum development in order to produce a unique Master's degree programme is highly commendable and should be continued.
- ⤴ The opportunity to rationalise content across courses/subjects should be explored further, in order to provide fewer subjects/topics and allow for more in-depth analysis, evaluation and synthesis at this level. This would enhance the quality of the learning experience, remove any perception of similarity with aspects of a Bachelor degree, enhance profile of the graduate and reinforce the status of the programme.
- ⤴ With regard to the earlier reference, the terminology used to describe some programme learning outcomes makes frequent use of words such as 'know' and 'understand'. These descriptors could be said to relate more appropriately to programmes of study at a lower level. As indicated already, the standard and quality of the programme, as described to the panel members on the occasion of the site visit confirmed effectively and accurately the level and focus of the learning outcomes.

- ⤴ Documentation produced by the University relating to both the full-time Master's degree in International Business and the EMBA should emphasise how an identical programme meets the needs of both cohorts of students.
- ⤴ The involvement of an increased number of international visiting lecturers/external subject experts would further enrich the delivery of the programme.
- ⤴ The input provided by social partners is seen as highly important by the panel. In this context, perhaps the introduction of a formal awards ceremony which would recognise outstanding achievement on the part of selected alumni would further strengthen the support for the programme from graduates and social partners generally.

#### IV. SUMMARY

This Master's programme has a number of distinctive features, has been developed systematically, and is subject to regular review and revision. The qualification is highly regarded by alumni, social partners and students of the programme.

The recommendations and other comments/suggestions made above should be viewed as a unit, and are intended to strengthen further what is already a well-established and highly regarded qualification.

In conclusion, the panel members wish to thank the staff at all levels, as well as students, alumni and social partners, for the courtesy and cooperation extended to us on the occasion of the site visit to the University.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme International Business (state code ó 621N12004) at Kaunas University of Technology is given a **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>18</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

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**KAUNO TECHNOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETO ANTROS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ  
PROGRAMOS TARPTAUTINIS VERSLAS (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621N12004) 2013-  
05-27 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-154 IŠRAŠAS**

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**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Kauno technologijos universiteto studijų programa Tarptautinis verslas (valstybinis kodas 621N12004) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities vertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji išteklių	3
5.	Studijų kokybė ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	3
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>18</b>

\* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminiai trūkumai, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai patenkinama sritis, turi savitumų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinai)

**1. IV. SANTRAUKA**

Magistrantų šios studijų programa turi keletą išskirtinių bruožų, yra parengta sistemingai, reguliariai peržiūrima ir koreguojama. Teikiama kvalifikacija aukštai vertinama absolventais, socialiniai partneriai ir programos studentai.

Aukščiau pateiktas rekomendacijas ir kitas pastabas / pasiūlymus reikėtų išnagrinėti kaip visumą; jų tikslas – toliau stiprinti puikiai parengtą ir aukštai vertinamą kvalifikaciją.

Ekspert grupės nariai norėtų padėti visiems grandžių darbuotojams, taip pat studentams, absolventams ir socialiniams partneriams už malonų sutikimą ir bendradarbiavimą vizito universitete metu.

**2. III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

- ▲ Inovatyvūs pasiūlymai programos tobulinimui siekiant sukurti unikalią magistrantų šios studijų programą yra labai pagirtinas ir turėtų būti toliau.
- ▲ Galimybė racionalizuoti kursų / dalykų turinį turėtų būti analizuojama toliau, siekiant pasiūlyti mažiau dalykų / temų ir užtikrinti gilesnį analizę, vertinimą ir sintezę. Tai sustiprintų mokymosi patirties kokybę, panaikintų bet kokį panašumų bakalauro laipsnio aspektus, sustiprintų absolventų profilį bei programos statusą.
- ▲ Atsivertę prieš tai paminėtus aspektus, kai kuriems programos numatomiems studijų rezultatams aprašyti daiktinai naudojami tokie žodžiai kaip šifras ir šifras. Tiesioginiai deskriptoriai labiau tiktų aprašyti šios pakopos studijų programas. Kaip jau buvo

nurodyta, programos lygis ir kokybė, kaip jie buvo pristatyti ekspertų grupės nariams susitikimo metu, efektyviai ir tiksliai patvirtino numatomą studijų rezultatų lygį ir orientaciją.

- ▲ Universiteto pateikti dokumentai, susiję su nuolatiniomis tarptautinio verslo magistrantūros studijomis ir EMBA magistrantūros vadovams studijomis, turėtų patvirtinti, kaip ta pati programa atitinka abiejų studentų grupių poreikius.
- ▲ Didelis tarptautinių kvieštinių lektorių / i-orių ekspertų skaičius dar labiau praturtintų programą.
- ▲ Socialiniai partneriai indelį ekspertų grupę laiko labai svarbiu. Galbūt oficiali apdovanojimų ypač ypatingus absolventų pasiekimus teikimo ceremonija toliau stiprintų absolventų ir apskritai socialinių partnerių programai teikiamą paramą.

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