



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS

at ISM University of Management and Economics

Expert panel:

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6. PhD. Matthew Kitching, *students' representative*.

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Study Field Data

I.

Title of the study programme	International Business and Communication
State code	6121LX009
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3,5 years
Credit volume	210 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	English
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	2009

II.

Title of the study programme	Entrepreneurship and Innovations
State code	6121LX075
Type of studies	University

Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 3 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Business Management
Language of instruction	English
Minimum education required	Secondary
Registration date of the study programme	2021

III.

Title of the study programme	Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) (together with KTU)
State code	6285LX001
Type of studies	University
Cycle of studies	Second

Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time, 1 year
Credit volume	60 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Business Management
Language of instruction	English
Minimum education required	Higher (or equivalent)
Registration date of the study programme	2017

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 6th May 2022.

Prof. Dr. Peter A. Jones (panel chairperson), academic, an independent consultant in the field of higher education, director of „Wensworth Jones Limited“ (U.K.);

Prof. Dr. José María Gil Roig, academic, professor in Business and Economics at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain);

Prof. Dr. Eric Waarts, academic, professor at Business Management School, Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands);

MSc Nicholas Coleman, academic; head of study programmes in Management in London Metropolitan University (U.K.);

Ms. Ugnė Bartašiūtė, representative of social partners, head of Communication at Modus Group, (Lithuania);

PhD. Matthew Kitching, students' representative, a PhD student at Lancaster University, ESU expert and member of the Steering Committee.

With the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before the visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	A link to the Self-assessment report to the career progression of students.
2.	Extended list with business field staff publications, conferences attended (Annexes 2A-2C).
3	Staff survey example and results (Annex 3)
4	Student survey examples, examples of discussions and actions taken, examples of feedback letters to students (Annex 4).

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

ISM (University of Management and Economics) was established in 1999 by BI Norwegian Business School and Innovation in Norway, as the first private for-profit state accredited business universities in Lithuania. It is an autonomous institution with its own governance, finance, personnel and programmes operating within the framework of the universities regulations and according to its own statutes

The university operates through a Board of Shareholders who are the representatives of the investing organisations; BI Business School, Kaunas University of Technology, and the Investment and Innovation Fund (UAB). The governance of the institution is through a board with an independent chair with membership composed of representatives from the shareholders and businesses. The President/Rector is responsible for ensuring that the university policies, procedures and regulations are in place, and that the board can be assured of the quality of the learning provision and the student experience. The University Senate advises the President on university strategies and includes representatives of the Student Association as well as external members from local and international higher education institutions and one business representative.

Operating within the world of business, the study fields are significant contributors to the overall mission and vision of the University, where the overall mission is to be dedicated to "high-quality business education" and that together with business and social partners they co-create knowledge or critical thinking to challenge the status quo, inspire to make an impact and empower a sustainable change. The vision is to establish themselves as a top business university in Northern Europe recognised for thought leadership, innovative approach to research - based education and with a focus on future competencies and lifelong learning.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Business study field and **first cycle** at ISM University of Management and Economics is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	28

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

Business study field and **second cycle** at ISM University of Management and Economics is given **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	4
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	28

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

(1) Factual situation

There are three study programmes in the field of business; first cycle programmes are International Business and Communication, developed in 2009, and the recently introduced Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The second cycle programme is a joint programme with KTU, an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA).

All of the study programmes are developed to respond to emerging national and global labour market needs. The labour markets in the field of business are subject to the same internal and external pressures and contexts of changing business models and severe disruption as occurred with the COVID-19 pandemic. These pressures and those of technological innovation and change, shape the skills required for the future. The business environment is constantly scanned to understand changes in society's expectations and drivers of change. This is achieved through a review of the data provided at the national level as well as wider European and international levels, such as CEDEFOP 2021 (SER 1.1) The National publication of "Transformation of the Lithuanian Colony: 4 Strategic Directions" and the "2021–2027 EU Funds Investment Programme for Lithuania" emphasise the need for developing entrepreneurial skills and the development of skills and competencies required to implement transformational processes in the Lithuanian economy. Development of a high value - added economy requires skills to be able to solve complex problems, work creatively in a collaborative environment to secure innovation and change.

The learning outcomes are presented by programme, and articulate specific areas of graduate outcomes and skills grouped in five areas: knowledge and its application, research skills, special abilities, social abilities, and personal abilities. The outcomes are structured to ensure they are embedded within the programme and can be assessed to ensure the learning outcomes are being achieved.

For the second cycle EMBA programme there is a strong focus on leadership development which correlates with the identified national and international labour market needs.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel expressed confidence that the programmes' aims and outcomes conformed to the labour market and society needs and addressed the challenges of the future skills and knowledge needs in a rapidly developing business environment.

The aims and outcomes of the programmes are future focused and the wider international context were positively commented on in discussions with the stakeholder groups. The institutional culture, in realising the need to take measured risks and to create an enterprise mindset to meet future challenges was evidenced in discussions with the differing stakeholders. Particular reference was made that this approach was essential in supporting Lithuanian economic development and to compete in a global business market.

The international dimension was commented on as essential in meeting the institutional vision and was well recognised as a distinguishing feature of the institution by all of the stakeholders. The international focus and collaborative networks of the institution in both business and higher education support the development of intercultural competencies and the need and the skills working in culturally diverse teams. This is further supported by the study abroad opportunities and international placements.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

(1) Factual situation

ISM University of Management and Economics (ISM) has the stated mission "to serve as a platform dedicated to high-quality business education for students, current and future leaders; executives, entrepreneurs, experts." This platform provides an opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge for critical thinking to challenge the status quo, inspire to make an impact and to create an environment for sustainable change.

ISM has the vision to be the business University for Northern Europe with a mindset that can be characterised as "one step ahead". This vision includes the recognition for thought leadership, a focus on the future and the competencies required of graduates, an innovative approach to research-based education, and the willingness to explore and deliver excellence in all they do. The University has put in place an impressive number of academic initiatives and 'nudges' that have created programmes of teaching and learning to bring the business world into the class-room.

The University has a commitment to life-long learning and the development of their portfolio reflects this commitment, through the concept of serving those needs for different groups in society from potential students through to experienced business executives.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel recognises that the mission and vision are congruent with the stated aims and outcomes of the study programmes and that those programmes are designed to articulate with those needs.

The position of the business studies field within the context of the institution is well stated in the mission as "high quality business education", and in the vision to be the business University for Northern Europe. The discussions with the stakeholder groups indicated that values of the institution resonate with the strategic ambition to be 'one step ahead.'

The panel recognised that the connections and connectivity of the institution, especially in the international context, provides experience and opportunity for students and faculty that strongly supports the institutional vision and is to be commended.

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements

(1) Factual situation

The structures of the first and second cycle programmes are based on the existing legal and regulatory requirements for higher education in the Republic of Lithuania. They are also influenced by international standards including the ECTS Users guide and the AA CSPB business standards.

The University credit framework defines the overriding principles on which the programmes are structured. The framework supports flexibility in the curriculum design and delivery and facilitates national and international initiatives associated with the accumulation and transfer of student credit. One ECTS credit point relates to an average of 27 learning hours which would include both contact and self study hours.

The first cycle programme International Business and Communication, consists of a total of 210 ECTS which is above the minimum requirement of 180. Of that, the volume of credits within the study fields exceeds the minimum requirement of 120 in delivering 132 ECTS. The internship and the final thesis of 15 ECTS each, which meets the minimum requirements.

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation first cycle programme meets the minimum ECTS requirements for the programme overall 180 ECTS. The study field subjects within the programme account for 142 ECTS which is above the requirement of not less than 120. As with the other first cycle programme the internships and thesis provide 15 ECTS each.

The Executive Master of Business Administration complies with the regulatory framework with a total volume of study of 60 ECTS meeting the minimum requirement and given the nature of the programme all of the study field subjects are within the 60 ECTS. The final consulting project accounts for 10 ECTS.

All programmes are delivered in full time mode with the appropriate volume of study hours including the relationships between contact hours and self study being clearly defined.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel agrees that the programmes of study within the study field under review meet the ECTS, contact hours and overall structures to meet the legal requirements.

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes

(1) Factual situation

The aims and learning outcomes are defined and characterised using approved descriptors within the well recognised domain of “Bloom's Taxonomy”. The interrelationship between the level of studies, the programme learning outcomes and the teaching and assessment methods are well described (Annex A SER 1.4) in establishing the appropriate linkages that ensure the outcomes, teaching, learning, and assessment are congruent and that all of the appropriate outcomes can be addressed.

The learning and teaching approaches are based on the active engagement with the learner using a variety of delivery mechanisms where opportunity to innovate enhances the overall learning experience. The focus on the ‘real world’ ensures practical skills development within the context of the modules which in turn helps facilitate the interdisciplinary understanding of the business environment. The use of the enterprise activity running through the Enterprise and Innovation programme is a good example of the innovative nature of the engagement with the students to be participants and co-creators in the overall learning experience.

In addition to the creativity and innovation in the content design and delivery of the modules there is flexibility and opportunity for innovation within the assessment practices. These can range from open book exams to reflective practice. The number of assessments both summative and formative, are at the discretion of the faculty, where the alignment with the assessment can be clearly identified with the appropriate learning outcomes.

The panel noted the variation in the descriptors, complexity and requirements of the LO's between the two first cycle programmes. It would be appropriate to review both sets of LO's to both update and ensure that they best reflect the intended level and complexity of outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel identified that there is a clear and consistent approach to ensure learning outcomes aims and assessments are appropriately congruent and synchronised. Evidence from the discussions with faculty indicated there is a high level of flexibility in determining the appropriate assessment mechanisms for the content of the module and in measuring student performance against the outcomes.

In reviewing the learning outcomes the panel considers that whilst they may conform to standard descriptors they do not clearly reflect nor capture the added value that is recognised

by the students and the faculty. They are more a reflection of current expectations of graduate outcomes rather than encompassing a more innovative and one step ahead vision of the institution. The use of the more active verb might help, such as evaluate and assess.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students

(1) Factual situation

The structure and progression between levels for the first cycle programme are mapped against the learning outcomes and indicate the competences of the students are being appropriately developed across the totality of the programmes. There is a clear development structure that builds on the competencies between the levels of the programmes moving from a focus on acquisition to the higher level critical skills.

The second cycle EMBA is designed to deepen and enhance the students' understanding, knowledge and crucial thinking. Given the nature of the programme it exposes the students to a variety of perspectives that challenges their abilities to identify, analyse, research and propose creative solutions.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel agrees that there is clear evidence that the study programmes provide ample opportunities for students to develop their skills and competencies throughout their period of study.

The flexible and innovative opportunities for co-creation within the programme structures encourages experimental approaches working with industry and social partners to bring real-world problems into the curriculum. The focus on seeking real business outcomes creates the appropriate challenge to students and enhances their engagement in the learning process.

There is a clear international dynamic to the programmes which is evidenced through the wide international experience of faculty and the international business and institutional relationships. In discussing the issue of language opportunities within the study programmes it was noted that most students already speak between 2 to 3 languages and as English is the accepted language of business, this is the prime focus.

In discussions with faculty, students, and alumni the progression through the programmes are seen as a set of building blocks that take students from a broad knowledge and understanding of the study fields to a depth of understanding and complexity of the underpinning knowledge in the business field. The commensurate skills and competencies, in particular the higher order skills of critical thinking, adaptability and collaboration are developed as the programmes progress.

Within the EMBA, the programme the content is focused on leadership where the students develop their knowledge and understanding of the concepts whilst at the same time applying the appropriate business tools in solving real world problems. There is a specific module on leadership which aims to create a better understanding of the models, theories and leadership

approaches through experiential exercises and transformative learning. In particular the consultancy project in South Africa is to be commended as providing an opportunity for the development of leadership skills in a global environment.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

For the first cycle programme of International Business and Communication, students have the opportunity to choose three electives across a wide range of business related areas as well as some more attuned for their personal development. In addition students may qualify for a certificate of specialisation in one of three subject domains, "International Business Decisions, International Marketing and Sales and Organisational Management."

In the Enterprise and Innovation programme students elective choice is for three modules in the second and third years, across the domains of developing special skills in digital technologies, marketing, and economics. Students can also study abroad at ISM partner universities. Students who have obtained at least 60 ECTS credits at partner universities are awarded a double diploma.

The EMBA programme does not offer elective modules, but students have the opportunity to personalise the study programmes by using their own business based case studies as well as personalising the range of consultancy topics to suit their individual learning and business needs.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel noted the range of personal choice available to the students as well as the international mobility opportunities. These are considered appropriate opportunities for students to personalise their learning, whilst ensuring that the key learning outcomes and the aims of the programmes are being met.

The opportunities for students to obtain additional "Certificates of Specialisation" in the first cycle International Business and Communication programme provides interesting opportunities for adding value to the students graduate outcomes. The University may wish to consider how this approach could be applied and implemented across the other range of programmes within the business fields.

The panel noted that additional electives can be initiated as cooperative developments with students, social partners and other academic partners within the collaborative academic network and that is to be commended.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements

(1) Factual situation

In the International Business in Communication programme students defend their Final Bachelor Thesis (FBT), which is based on their company experiences during internships. Exceptions are allowed, where in certain companies, the student would be engaged in solving a company problem with a company client, or where the student has been unable to conduct empirical research during the internship. This may arise through bankruptcy of the company or concerns of the academic thesis supervisor as to whether the company is a suitable stakeholder in the thesis.

An essential element of the FBT is research and commentary on the international aspect within the context of the internship company. Additionally problems relevant to the company's operations must be analysed, reviewed and appropriate solutions must be presented.

The students select the issues and topics for their thesis and these are then agreed and developed with the assistance of the thesis advisors. The topics are then approved by the programme director after the presentation of a research proposal by the student.

Additional academic writing support is provided to guide students through the process and to ensure that the thesis meets the overall methodological, research and presentation requirements. The thesis must conform to the appropriate framework and contain a relevant literature review. The work is summarised in both Lithuanian and English, but the thesis must be written in accurate English. Turnitin is used to check plagiarism and should plagiarism be evidenced the matter is reported to the committee of ethics. If plagiarism is found the student would not be allowed to defend the thesis.

A review of the sample of the theses provided indicates the relevance of the thesis in addressing specific business problems, often but not exclusively within one organisation. The problems are clearly stated and evaluated and appropriate tools are evidenced in the empirical data collection and subsequent analysis. Of note is the emphasis on the managerial implications of the findings with the supporting recommendations in resolving the identified business problems.

The defence commission consisting of three academics and one social partner is the final body where the student is provided with the opportunity to defend the thesis. In the event of failure the student will be allowed to resubmit or re-defend but not until the next semester.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the view that the final theses meet the objectives and that the process and outcomes are of a sound quality and at a standard commensurate with national norms.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The recognised creativity and flexibility in designing and delivering high quality programmes well focused on the future rather than current needs.

2. The international context in which the programs are set is supported by the wider international connectivity of the University.
3. The engagement and quality of the staff is impressive and highlights a positive culture of appropriate 'risk taking' which is needed to simulate the cut and thrust of the business world and this is reflected in the programmes aims and structures
4. There is impressive stakeholder buy-in to all the activities of the Business School with social/business partners and former students providing guidance to the reviews and development of the learning outcomes and content of the programmes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. As with all such innovative programmes of study there is always an element of experimentation, and this could be unsettling for students with a more traditional expectation of the programme and will require special attentions the programme develops.
2. Learning outcomes are the trigger for the creative interpretation of learning and there is scope to enhance the language used for them to ensure they reflect the reality of the intentions.
3. Whilst the learning outcomes may conform to standard descriptors they do not clearly reflect nor capture the added value that is recognised by the students and the faculty and would benefit from further review.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

(1) Factual situation

ISM conducts most of its scientific research in the areas of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, International Business and Communication, Leadership, and Sustainability. These are the areas close to its teaching programmes and are therefore most relevant for facilitating academic learning. A Comparative Expert Assessment of R&D activities conducted in 2018 evaluated ISM's research output as very good at the international level, having the highest score among all Lithuanian universities in the field of Social Sciences.

Faculty members have a lot of freedom defining their own mix of tasks regarding education, research and consulting. In quantitative terms, the SER reports 121 research outputs over the past four years, of which 39 peer reviewed papers, 69 presentations at international conferences, and 13 book chapters and monographs. Hence, on average, ISM's research active

faculty produces one peer reviewed article per person per three years. Citation indices are not provided in the SER, but the level of journals in which has been published seems adequate, occasionally reaching international high-level output. ISM partners with various respected partner universities across the world, is an active member of various international organisations, and its faculty is internationally active, for instance as visiting faculty.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the opinion that ISM faculty is adequately involved in research in the fields of Management and Economics, performing fundamental research as well as applied research and consultancy. The panel considers ISM's research productivity at a fair level. However, up to now, only few publications find their way to high level academic journals, which has to be increased over time if ISM wants to reach its international ambitions.

All in all, the panel considers the R&D function at ISM well developed, producing a good level of scientific output, while there is still room for conducting more excellent research that will find its way into international high level journals. This is a necessary condition for developing the school further in an international setting.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology

(1) Factual situation

The curricula encompass the components and fields of study one can expect in a research active school in the area of Business and Management. The programmes are systematically discussed and formally reviewed under the leadership of the Programme Director, and they are adjusted regularly in the view of latest developments in the field. The launch of the Entrepreneurship & Innovation programme is an example of how ISM is actively adjusting to the expected future education in the area of business studies. ISM's core faculty is research active and brings evidence based knowledge in the classroom through using scholarly articles, case studies that are sometimes ISM developed ones, and by using recent books and syllabi. All programmes end with a research based thesis (or a final-project in the case of the EMBA) addressing a real world business issue.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is of the opinion that ISM's programmes put a strong emphasis on scientific rigour and knowledge and on developing research skills, while at the same time stressing the relevance for problems of the real business world. ISM is to be commended for that approach.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle

(1) Factual situation

In the IBC programme students are actively involved in research activities through courses (Data Analysis, Business Research Methods) and projects (Nordplus, Creative Shock), and through their Bachelor thesis. In the new E&I programme various research modules are linked to design thinking and problem solving. That said, some students find the E&I programme less “academic” than what one would normally expect at a research university. This might be due to the different didactical approach ISM takes using experiential learning instead of the more traditional “knowledge” learning approach in the IBC programme. For their Bachelor thesis, both IBC and E&I students need to prove their empirical research skills in the context of a real business problem. In the EMBA – mostly a second master – students focus on action research, e.g. through a consultancy project in South Africa and a business project mostly in their own company.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

According to the panel, in all programmes under review academic research skills are sufficiently embedded in the curricula through courses, assignments, and projects. The panel urges ISM to critically review the new E&I programme from an “academic” learning viewpoint, to at least prevent attracting students looking for an “easy” study. The Bachelor theses of the IBC programme are of sound quality, the panel could not yet evaluate any theses from the E&I programme since the programme has just started this programme and has only run its first year.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Active research by core faculty of high relevance to the programmes.
2. Internationally well-networked.
3. Research is systemically incentivised by the school.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Still relatively few international publications in high level journals
2. Downside of a highly flexible faculty model, is not steering staff firmly on the type of research output required to meet the research ambitions.
3. The E&I programme needs to be careful about the perceived academic level as the programme develops whilst emphasising the unique entrepreneurial approach to the teaching and learning.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process

(1) Factual situation

ISM have well established and codified admission criteria. These are communicated to prospective students and other stakeholders through the institution's website and other publicity material. Criteria include prior academic attainment, evidenced through secondary school diplomas and English language criteria. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports play a central role in determining acceptable competition scores. For admission to the International Business and Communication and Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme, students may not be admitted with a score lower than that set by the Ministry. The average score of the 5 subjects with the highest grades should not be lower than 7 (based on a 10-point scale). Admission to the Executive MBA is subject to the decision of the joint ISM-KTU Admissions Committee for the shared programme. Students may be admitted with a related bachelor's degree or equivalent or alternatively from other fields in addition to holding 3 years management experience. Applicants write an assessed essay as part of the application process and attend an interview. ISM implements an early application window for international students, to support their effective transition to the institution and a different country. Applicants who are denied entry to a programme may petition the Appeals Committee for an exception.

Admissions Managers are central to ensuring these are understood by applicants by responding to queries in person, online and over the phone. Advice provided by Admission Managers includes information surrounding the admission procedure, programme and curriculum, study regulations, financial matters, accommodation, visa procedures and recognition of their qualifications. They are also responsible for scheduling campus visits for applicants. Admissions Managers liaise with the Study and Quality Manager where applicants require assistance in organising their academic path.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel found that admissions criteria are appropriate for the programmes subject to accreditation. They also found that they are consistently applied, including through the partnership with KTU for the EMBA. Students confirmed that publicity material and entry criteria are clear, well published and that they understood both the criteria and the process when applying for their programmes. International students confirmed that the early application window available to them supports effective orientation and transition to Lithuanian higher education.

Overall enrolment has remained relatively stable in recent years. The International Business and Communication programme has benefited from an increase in application from 136 in

2019 to 183 in 2021. ISM enrolled a larger cohort in 2020, including a higher proportion (24.26%) of international students. However, the programme was also subject to a higher than usual dropout rate of 14.71% in the same year. This was largely attributable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the student experience, as well as challenges around student completion of mathematics elements within the programme. The institution identified a series of interventions to address these challenges including the introduction of an 'early alert system, the production of additional course materials and the rollout of peer-to-peer support groups. The panel found these interventions to be appropriate and effective. The new Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme enjoyed a strong conversion rate in its first year, enrolling 40 students from 72 applicants. Finally, the Executive MBA enrolment fluctuated between 27 and 32 students, with low dropout rates owing to the blended nature of the programme.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application

(1) Factual situation

ISM have established procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning. Where an applicant has gained qualifications at foreign higher education institutions abroad (except for those with whom Lithuania has

official agreements for recognition) diplomas and transcripts must be submitted to the Study Services department. These are then scrutinised by the Quality Manager who checks their authenticity, the status of the degree granting institution, content, profile, workload, quality and learning outcomes of the foreign qualification and determines whether the application should progress.

Where current students attend another institution as part of their programme of study, for instance under an Erasmus or internal ISM mobility programme, they are required to complete a study agreement. The Programme Director will approve the modules, learning outcomes and duration of the study abroad period. Following the conclusion of the mobility period, students must ensure that an academic transcript from the partner institution is sent to the International department by the partner institution or student themselves in order to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and academic credit.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel found that staff and students understood the procedures for recognising foreign qualifications and academic credit and that they were applied with rigour. In the previous 3 academic years, between 2018 and 2021, a total of 123 applications for recognition were received with 42 approved and 81 refused. Reasons included incomplete applications and documentation and termination of the admission process, which was the most significant reason.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students.

(1) Factual situation

ISM facilitate student mobility through the Erasmus programme, exchange through bilateral agreements and the delivery of double degrees. The International Business and Communication programme, for example, has 48 Erasmus agreements, 12 bilateral agreements and 3 double diplomas with BI Norwegian Business School, KEDGE Business School and INSEEC University. Given the recent introduction of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme, these type of agreements are still under consideration. Criteria for selecting new partners include alignment of the study programme offered by the foreign school to ISM study programmes, a high supply of business field subjects in English and other languages in which ISM students are fluent and internationally recognised accreditations awarded to the foreign school, such as EQUIS, EPAS, AACSB and AMBA.

The International Studies Office (ISO) are responsible for promoting potential mobility opportunities to students. Messages are hosted on the virtual learning environment (Moodle), the ISM website and noticeboards around campus. The International Studies Office also organise information events for students to share their mobility experiences with students considering their options. The ISO provides academic advice to inbound and outbound students, assists with visas and other immigration issues and administers the collection, supply and registration of transcripts and transfers credits earned from host institutions.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel determined that the institution appears to be exceeding the normative national position in relation to student mobility. A total of 141 students have participated in outgoing mobility from the International Business and Communication programme and between 2019 and 2021 100% of students on the EMBA took part in the short-term mobility visit to Cape Town in South Africa. Students informed the team that information about mobility opportunities is well publicised and clear and they feel encouraged to take part. The panel did reflect that growing the number of internationally recognised partners, for example to deliver dual degrees, may enhance the attractiveness of the programme applicants and the reputation of the institution.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

(1) Factual situation

A wide range of academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support is in place for students. Introduction week, exposes students to critical information about academic support services, including the library, IT, Career Centre and International Studies Office. Students are also invited to join student organisations during orientation and are provided with campus tours, team building activities and introductory sessions delivered by programme tutors. The academic aspect of orientation includes introductions to students' programme of study,

assessment criteria and teaching methods. Students are also provided with a student handbook, relevant academic regulations and given assistance in selecting electives. Further to this, international students are provided with a 'buddy' who supports the student with logistical challenges associated with moving to a foreign country.

Lecturers are available to students during scheduled teaching sessions but also through email, online meeting software and bookable consultations. ISM has dedicated counselling and psychological support in place, comprehensive information about which is detailed on the institution's website.

Careers support is provided by the Career Centre. Services include consultations for students to assist with career planning, writing CVs and motivation letters and advice about job searches and attending interviews. The Career Centre also provides training and seminars on career development issues and facilitates meetings between students and employers. This wide-ranging support is supplemented with regular newsletters.

ISM provides a range of financial support for local and international students. Alumni are eligible to receive a 30% discount if they progress to graduate level study. Individual scholarships are also awarded to advanced students, who are actively involved in the university community. High performing international applicants may also receive a 10-50% discount on their tuition fee. In addition, ISM Achievement Scholarships are bestowed on the 10 best students on business studies programmes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel found that the wide range of academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support available to students is valued and effective. Orientation arrangements are comprehensive and, in the opinion of students, provide them with an effective baseline from which to engage in their studies. Following induction, pastoral and academic support remains accessible online and face-to-face. Students reported that staff are readily contactable and equip students with the necessary industry networks, skills and knowledge to succeed in their career.

ISM are working with an impressive range of national and international employers, including Adform, Moody's, Revolut, Nestle and Danske Bank. Through these networks the institution has helped to promote a substantial range of jobs, internships and community work opportunities to their students (for example over 800 in 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic the panel found that ISM had adapted to ensure that exposure to industry was retained within the curriculum, for instance through the use of online visits to Lithuanian companies. ISM also draw effectively on their alumni network to provide mentoring schemes for current undergraduate students.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

(1) Factual situation

At the start of each module, lecturers are required to introduce students the aims and the objectives of the module, the learning outcomes, assessment and attendance requirements. This information is also provided on Moodle and supplemented by student handbooks. Lecturers are also required to provide a dedicated two-hour window for student consultations. However, staff and students alike recognise that the blended nature of the programmes, with students often working in addition to their studies, and the impact of the pandemic mean that much study information and counselling is provided online and through email.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Students reported high levels of satisfaction to the panel regarding the scale and detail of programme and module information. In particular, students were clear what was required in order to succeed in their assessment and surrounding the content of individual modules. Additionally, students felt able to approach a wide range of staff to seek support, including but not limited to module tutors, programme directors, the Vice-Rector and relevant administrative staff.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The thorough and comprehensive approach to admissions, including the early admission window for international students.
2. Supportive and effective arrangements for enabling outgoing mobility
3. Targeted interventions, such as additional mathematics support and the use of peer-to-peer support groups for combatting dropout rates.
4. The wide range of employer engagement provided through the curriculum and by the ISM Career Centre.

(2) Weaknesses: No serious weaknesses identified during the evaluation process.

**3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE
EMPLOYMENT**

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

It is evident from the site visit that ISM has gone to extraordinary lengths to develop educational programmes that fit the requirements of the 21st century. There is a feeling of a visionary way ahead for higher education linked to the Business School which is embedded in the business community of Lithuania and beyond. It is very challenging to develop educational programmes that are required to reflect the real labour market situation and ISM should be congratulated on their originality and innovative concepts to achieve this objective. As it was noted during the meetings with staff – the university strives to prepare Lithuanian business for international competition. The teaching of business knowledge and skills is fraught with complexity in the context of an academic environment; therefore, it is often difficult to make clear connections between theory and practice. It is to the credit of ISM that they have embarked on this ambitious journey with programmes of studies that attempt to do this. This is not straightforward and there are bumps in the road as a result, stemming from new ways of teaching and learning, but our site visit was very reassuring because the engagement of the staff, students, former students and social/business partners is clearly very robust.

The aim of International Business and Communications (IBC) is to educate future specialists who have knowledge and understanding of the business world including corporate general functioning, governance, development, and management skills to ensure efficiency of decision making and to formulate judgments that are socially and ethically responsible. All the above issues should be developed in the global business environment through a combination of cultural awareness and effective communication skills, on both personal and professional level. The evidence for the success of this was clearly outlined in discussions with the current students and former students at the institute plus social/business partners. One of the very clear messages received from former students and social partners was the adaptability and professionalism of students of ISM. It was also mentioned specifically by a former student who highlighted that due to the ‘cultural awareness’ of ISM he was able to start an ethical business which is clearly an outstanding result of the programme!

Equally there is very strong data that highlights the former graduate’s awareness of skills gained in the programme with rankings for professional competence, teamwork, public speaking, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and decision making. The scores achieved by IBC are in the range of good to excellent, and as a self-evaluation exercise post graduation this is very positive. It was also reflected in discussions with social partners and former students that they felt able to contribute to their organisations from a very early stage of entering the labour market. This is a vital aspect of the whole rationale for the programmes of study, and the evidence is clear that the programmes deliver what they have set to achieve.

The aim of Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme according to the SER is to prepare responsible, critical thinking, creative business specialists acquainted with new technologies, able to create, manage and develop business in the global environment and develop consumer centred innovative services and products. Again, the discussions with social partners and

former students and current students highlighted the extraordinary effort that was committed to ensuring that students of the programme have abilities to create and solve business problems and develop start-up business mindset. Some of these skills are experimental to some extent and of course this is touching on complex areas of 'soft skills' and hard knowledge areas, but the evidence from social partners is that students from ISM offer extremely flexible and competent skills and are prepared to take on challenges.

This is a new course so there is no data for graduate assessments of the skills gained in the programme yet but the feedback from the discussions with current and former students suggest that there is great scope here to create a dynamic new type of educational experience linked to a continuous business development project and high levels of direct business development opportunities, this is extremely commendable!

The aim of the Executive Master of Business Administration programme according to the SER is to prepare emerging leaders who have advanced understanding of business and management to lead organisations in the context of the volatility and uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in an effective and responsible and ethical way. In addition, to develop lifelong learning skills and personal leadership to enable them to work with self-direction, originality and to contribute to society at large. The EMBA own assessment of the skills gained in the programme again highlights extremely positive results for professional competence, teamwork, public speaking, foreign language skills, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and decision making. Students are prepared for a rapidly changing world in terms of both – soft and hard skills. Flexibility of the studies was highlighted by allowing students to manage both – studying and working. Again, the discussions with social partners and former students supported the evidence that the programme has achieved its learning outcomes.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel felt that the university was extremely well focussed on the needs of students which enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes via the teaching and learning culture of the institute.

The teaching style for the Business School is primarily student-centred approach with different methodologies linked to the learning outcomes and the nature of the programme of learning and this is to be commended. For example, in the international business and communications programme the teaching style is student centred and interactive preserving the balance between academic rigour and practical skills (SERp55). The programme includes active learning methods to foster the achievement of personal, professional, and general skills and competences and his link to lectures, seminars, case studies, guest lecturers etc.

The entrepreneurship and innovation programme uses a flipped classroom and blended learning model where students learn and gain practical experience in business projects and in the classroom together with the teacher to consolidate their knowledge and look for answers to issues raised. This module is particularly effective as it encourages students to actively search for knowledge and use critical evaluation of their knowledge and skills.

The teaching methods on the MBA is learner centred teaching and focuses on participants' learning process, their active involvement in class and the emphasis is on using communicating knowledge effectively to address emerging issues in the context of real life problems. This encourages students to role play and use situations to develop and creatively seek solutions for real world problems.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

(1) Factual situation

The SER highlights the support provided to the socially vulnerable groups and students and highlights a responsible culture which is equally inclusive to special needs and non-special needs students. This is a complex area of understanding and the facilities and provision of practical requirements for students with special needs is evidenced from the data within the SER. Unfortunately, there were no students available to discuss this during the visit to the university and ideally in future the university would ensure that such students would be available for a face-to-face discussion. However, it is evident from meeting the staff of the university and the senior management team that the organisation and financial support to students with special needs is appropriate.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel was reassured that the institute had an appropriate focus on the needs of the socially vulnerable students and groups. The SER highlights the facilities, organisation of studies and financial support for students with special needs. It is noted that quality standards are not modified for students with disabilities but that there is plenty of time allocated for the preparation of assessments and this is acceptable. There is no mention of how these stakeholders are accounted for in the management of programmes, but the policies, principles and procedures appear more than adequate.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

(1) Factual situation

The university provides a very supportive culture, which is evidenced throughout the panel's visit, by comments of current and former students and social partners. The need to understand their progress is critical to the successful outcomes of the learning objectives and there is clear evidence that ISM provides excellent support in this respect as one student noted that he/she had 'just the right amount of time to discuss assessments with academic staff'. The concept of feeding forward in assessments was not discussed but clearly this is also a vital element of this agenda. Another key aspect of this is staff motivation and resources to

support students that have been failing and again, the site visit was very reassuring in this respect.

More practically, the syllabus of each module is prepared by the respective lecturer and coordinated by the programme director and contains specific modes of assessment and grading criteria. For example, written individual group assignments are intended to develop students' ability to determine scientifically practical problems, to apply theory and practice, to solve practical tasks using specific data analysis tools etc. The site visit provided strong evidence of student engagement with their studies, and this can only be achieved by having an enlightened assessment environment with feedback that allows students to feel equally valued and directed appropriately, as if they are co-creating their own assessments.

A key factor here is the dropout rates for all study programmes are very low and first year dropouts can be linked to math subjects which reflects national trends. The university has high standards of managing these problems with an early warning system, consultations, additional course material for self-study, peer-to-peer support groups and so on.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel felt that the institute had an appropriate methodology to monitor students progress and provided feedback to students that was able to promote self-assessment.

The evidence from the site visit and discussions with students is that student feedback is appropriate for the purposes of enabling self-assessment and the planning of study progress. The key here is that assessments are also enabled by feeding forward and engaging students with the tasks at hand and the site visit confirmed that assessments were engaging and well-constructed etc. Special attention is paid to international students and the staff are available for meetings at convenient times for support in assignments.

The university has an assurance of learning (AOL) system which collects data in order to measure the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. Assessment instruments are defined, and this provides a tracking mechanism to ensure that there is a control on the assessments provided and the outcomes of those assessments. Student progression is always linked to the ability of students to navigate the range of assessments that they have and there is a requirement to ensure that progression is robust. There was no detail particularly on student progression which is something that would have benefited the evaluation. However, the overall feeling from the site visit was that there was a very positive culture to supporting students throughout their studies and this was evident from student feedback and social partners.

The panel believes that all assessments are worthy of considerable time and energy from the students and the feedback is a critically important aspect of the contract between the staff and students, this appears to be the case at the institute. Innovative study programmes require innovative assessments, and this is to be commended as they do take courage to create and assess.

3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field

(1) Factual situation

The evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate careers tracking is clearly addressed in the SER, demonstrating that the institute has a professional focus on the ability of students to succeed in business on completion of their studies. This is an unusual level of focus and is linked to the closeness of the institute to the business community where they co-create opportunities for the future of ISM students. The fact that 99% of graduates of ISM would recommend the programme to their friends and colleagues is a very important outcome for the programmes.

An impressive aspect of the employability of the students from ISM was the evidence from the site visit when students discussed their current ability to connect with organisations outside of the university, study visits, invited guests' speakers, mentorship programmes etc. It was noted that learning from experience while combining it with theory is at the heart of each discipline. The very positive feedback from companies employing ISM graduates highlighting their flexibility and ability to provide valuable contributions at a very early stage in their careers is the most important aspect. ISM graduates were described as creative, sharp minded and with a strong innovative and problem-solving mindset.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel felt that this was a particular strength for ISM and should be commended. In particular, the need for an economy like Lithuania to start new businesses and maintain economic growth. It is great if the university stimulates students to be responsible for the starting of a company that achieves the fastest growth for Lithuania (top 100 companies) within the next 5 years using the start-up accelerator programme as a goal etc.

According to the alumni survey performed by ISM career centre within 1 year, 79% of the International Business and Communication graduates were working for an employer, almost 22% have their own business and 30% have their own business and work for an employer at the same time. These are very positive statistics for this programme and 65% of graduates became employed while studying, this is impressive.

Executive Master of Business Administration according to the SER 75% enter the programme already in executive positions or owning their own business. There were no specific statistics on the post graduate outcomes but 100% would recommend the programme of study to their friends and this is very significant.

3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

(1) Factual situation

ISM operate with a code of ethics which covers such areas as impartiality, freedom of speech, non-discrimination, academic solidarity, assurance of teaching etc. The evidence from the site visit was that the university has an excellent focus on academic integrity and tolerance and

non-discrimination. The university fosters open discussions and encourages its community to express their opinion, which was particularly felt during the meeting with students and academic staff.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The institute showed a high level of awareness of the above policies from the SER and from the site visit. There were no recorded violations of academic integrity in the period for this evaluation which is a very positive outcome. It is the panel's view that the institute has appropriate policies, principles and procedures for these situations in place.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

(1) Factual situation

The SER did not address this issue directly and during the site visit it was confirmed that there were no cases of appeals and complaints in the review period. This reflects a careful process of student selection and the ability to engage students in their subject areas.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The panel is confident that this is an area that has the appropriate policies, principles and procedures linked to the Code of Ethics and the Ethics Committee and the regulation of studies (SER p60).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A clear and significant strength of ISM is the visionary nature of the senior management team and their belief in an educational programme that is closely connected to the business world internationally and this cascades into the student performance and graduate outcomes of the programmes.
2. Culture of innovation- the university supports a proactive approach to developing appropriate teaching methodologies and assessment methodologies which are the fundamental building blocks for new business development.
3. Students in their endeavours are encouraged to take risks, to understand the dynamics of business and this is vital in the business world.
4. Post-graduation data and feedback from social and business partners highlight that students from ISM tick many of the key boxes for employability to the extent that such students have a competitive advantage compared to graduates from another institution.

5. Word of mouth recommendation from former students is extremely impressive about the study programmes benefits.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. It is always difficult to achieve innovative programmes of study and to some extent there will be problems pursuing this agenda so students should be well cared for if they struggle with the unusual dynamics of this approach.
2. There is a potential tension between academic study results and the evaluation of student competencies required in the labour market, this needs to be constantly addressed.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

(1) Factual situation

All members of the academic staff team have the necessary qualifications and experience for the different degrees. A high percentage hold a PhD. There is also a good equilibrium between experienced and younger researchers although research productivity levels are unequally distributed in favour of the younger. Additionally, there is a good combination of permanent and part-time staff. The programme is also quite flexible to invite employers or social partners as lecturers for specific topics. Most of the lecturers have excellent contacts with social partners. Additionally, the University has done a good job in attracting experienced lecturers with a significant background in relevant international universities.

Lecturers are quite flexible to allocate their time between research, teaching, consultancy and institutional positions. The SER provides some orientations about time allocation to the different activities. However, after the conversation with the staff, this time allocation does not seem to represent the reality. Moreover, although the University provides incentives to carry out research, there is a feeling that recruitment is mainly based on teaching needs with research playing a less important role. In any case, there is a general recognition among social partners that ISM helps them in providing academic rigour to solve real day-to-day problems.

Amongst the positive features are the ratio of lecturers to students, the age distribution of lecturers, the practical skills and experience, the incorporation of their research and consultancy work in their teaching and the constant contact with businesses. Moreover, there is a nice flexibility to accommodate contents to business changes. In this context, the potential improvement for the future should concentrate around generating more collaboration among

permanent staff to solve real business problems in a more holistic and multidisciplinary way. The impression the panel got from the meetings was the lack of such internal collaboration.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

While the current situation is very positive, there is still a deficit in the quality of research work undertaken by members of the academic staff team. Staff publications and the participation of teachers in conferences (including the presentation of scientific papers) are adequate. The objective for the next period should be to increase the quality by 1) increasing the papers published in journal with high impact factor (Web of Science ISI or SCOPUS) as currently, less than 25% of the publications are in journals with Impact Factor; 2) improve the position of ISM authors in scientific publication. In around 50% of the publications, ISM authors are not placed as the first or the last author.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

(1) Factual situation

ISM belongs to several international networks. International mobility is outstanding. In 2019, 78% of the permanent staff were part of a mobility programme. Percentages decreased in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID. There is a significant collaboration with international experts in teaching. However, this internalisation is less significant in terms of research outcomes. The SER only provides information about two H2020 projects, one finished in 2018 and the other will be finished in 2023.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In connection with the previous section, the panel considers that international mobility could reinforce research contacts in order to stimulate the participation of ISM staff in international research projects. Moreover, the panel suggests that it would be useful in the future to introduce some information in the SER about participation in international proposals.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff

(1) Factual situation

ISM provides a significant range of facilities to staff to develop teaching and research tasks. ISM has quickly reacted to the change in teaching conditions due to COVID. The process has been smooth and students are happy with how the situation has been managed. As will also be mentioned in the next section, infrastructure is more than adequate.

A second important issue to highlight is the flexibility that ISM Management provides the staff to develop their activity. There exist individual negotiations with the staff to negotiate contracts based on their activity. Moreover, the management staff is continuously looking for changes to adapt to new business challenges. However, the risk of introducing many changes

at the same time is that it is difficult to assess and monitor the impact of such changes. The panel was positively impressed about how the staff manage the content of their subjects in order to provide leadership, creativity, entrepreneurship and critical thinking skills among students.

The research incentives are defined, but the SER is not very clear about what the levels refer to. Incentives to attend international conferences are also available.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Although incentives are defined, it has not yet generated a significant increase in productivity. The panel suggests that incentives should be maintained but re-orientated. Research incentives should depend in the future on the journals rank. Web of Science quartiles could be used as a valid reference. Moreover, incentives should focus on journals included in the Area of Economics and Business. Finally, incentives should differentiate if ISM authors are first or last in the authors list (both positions correspond to leadership or coordination roles, which are the most relevant).

In relation to incentive to stimulate participation in international conferences, the panel suggests that these may focus on younger researchers with limited participation in research projects yet. Incentives should also focus on participation in international projects from which the staff will have enough financial support to attend international conferences.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Adequacy of the recruitment process to attract talents.
2. Flexibility to accommodate content and students' assessments to changing conditions (new business challenges, COVID, and so on).
3. Good performance in international mobility.
4. Availability of research incentives and individual contractual negotiations.
5. Adequacy of learning outcomes and indicators for monitoring fulfilment.
6. Satisfactory incorporation of research and consultancy skills and results in teaching.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Research productivity needs to improve in outstanding journals.
2. International mobility is not related yet to an increase in the participation of international projects.
3. Need for a reorientation in research incentives.
4. Need for providing global performance indicators. Most of the SER is full of individual cases but does not provide enough KPIs.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

(1) Factual situation

The ISM has a well developed infrastructure and resources for ensuring International Business and Communications and Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Executive Master of Business Administration study programmes have effective learning delivery. Auditoriums are equipped with modern technical equipment that ensures a smooth hybrid/online learning process as well. Study areas are fitted for individual and group work. The current campus also has solutions for disabled people to access premises.

The University continuously invests into upgrading learning facilities and systems in auditoriums and work spaces used by both – students and staff. The University has a start-up space that is especially important in the study programmes' being evaluated. Some examples were noted by the graduates that launched their business on the University Campus.

ISM has a modern library with the latest material needed in the study process. Broad range of online databases can be accessed. Library staff periodically organises learning sessions to help users to navigate through all resources. Library can also be accessed remotely. What can be also noted, is a strategic goal of the library to assist in developing new programmes that is a value added for learning processes. Smooth cooperation while renewing library resources with up-to-date material is especially important in the study programmes' being evaluated.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Suitability and adequacy of resources ISM is of the highest standard that allows to ensure an effective and modern learning process within the study field. The University should keep high standards in the future as well and seek for continuous improvement in order to ensure that needed resources to carry out field studies are in place.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies

(1) Factual situation

As it was outlined in the SER report, ISM has made a decision to move the whole University campus to new premises in summer of 2022. According to the University, the decision was made in order to have better suited location and facilities for modernisation initiatives foreseen in ISM Strategic plan.

The current campus, though modern and adapted to the University's needs, has legal restrictions (building is protected by Cultural Heritage) for modernisation and upgrading. The new campus will be better suited for aiming ISM strategic goals to continuously improve its study programmes, learning processes and building strong community.

The decision to move ISM campus was met positively by various stakeholders including the University's community.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

During the time of evaluation process the transfer to the new campus was not yet implemented, therefore it is difficult to evaluate the final result. However, based on the material provided by the University, positive conclusions can be drawn that the new campus will have needed infrastructure and resources for the field studies and the process of transfer is coordinated according to the plan.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. ISM has modern and well adapted infrastructure and ensures required resources for a smooth learning process; relocation to a more fitting campus is in progress.
2. Significant investments into modernisation of facilities and online learning environment to be able organise learning processes both – online and offline.
3. Broad and up-to-date library resources.

(2) Weaknesses: No weakness were identified.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies

(1) Factual situation

The President/Rector has the responsibility for ensuring that the quality assurance systems are in place robust and are concerned with ensuring the quality of the student experience. The Senate meets twice a year, and takes reports from the appropriate academic and research committees that will also contain matters relating to quality assurance.

ISM created a new position of an accreditation director responsible for the overall quality of the programmes and the preparation of all of the accreditation processes required both

internally and externally. The academic programme directors have the direct day-to-day responsibility for the quality assurance of programmes within their programme areas.

There is a stated expectation that the faculty will enhance the learning environment and student experience in accordance with the institutional mission, aims, and learning outcomes. Faculty are engaged in the periodic meetings to discuss content curriculum based issues including improvement plans.

For the joint EMBA programme there is a separate study committee, with KTU, which is an advisory board to the programme director on the further development of the programme and any quality assurance or improvement issues arising.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

Whilst there is evidence of collection of internal feedback there is no clearly identifiable formal quality assurance process that focuses on quality improvement. The faculty input for example is an expectation, rather than a requirement, and from the evidence it is difficult to determine how the informal system interacts with a more formal quality assurance process.

The panel is of the view that a more formalised systematic and robust approach would be more transparent and support the institutional culture that is clearly seeking continuous improvement.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance

(1) Factual situation

Students are engaged with the University through their formal representation on committees which include Senate, study committee and curriculum committee.

There is a more formal module feedback system and university wide questionnaires including alumni surveys related to student satisfaction. Students additionally do have the opportunity of making informal contact with programme directors to discuss issues that may be arising.

These are in addition to midterm meetings of student representatives with the programme director. There is written feedback from the programme director to the students indicating how any particular issues have been resolved. This is the implementation of a previous recommendation of the last external evaluation.

The wider stakeholder groups are directly engaged with the University through formal representation in the deliberative committee structures. Informally industry and social partners are involved at the programme level through participation in the learning and teaching.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

It is recognised that the student participation in the quality assurance process is more informal than formal and that whilst formal systematic collection data is now in place it is not evident how that feedback and data is used in reviewing the quality of the student experience.

The evidence from the social partners, alumni and wider industry suggest that the informal relationships between the university and partners is very strong at the programme level. Whilst it is noted that there is representation in the deliberative structures the systematic collection and review of partners feedback is not evident and would improve the robustness of the QA systems and procedures.

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes

(1) Factual situation

The primary internal information management systems provide all of the required data for students admission, withdrawal, modules studied and grades awarded. This can therefore aggregate the data into cohort sets to provide an overall picture of student performance and progression.

Moodle is also used as a learning resource system that serves as an interface between the University administration and the student through the availability of detailed content including syllabuses, uploaded lecture materials and other course related learning support. Student assignments are uploaded, and the results are posted onto the information system, thereby creating an environment where the students have access to relevant information in a timely manner.

The information through the website contains details of the programme provision in English and Lithuanian, and it also contains university wide materials in relation to governance, programme information, reports and external reviews, and the quality policy.

An employer survey was conducted in 2021 as an NPS survey, of over 100 Lithuanian companies with a 45% response rate. The NPS score was 85.7 based on a recommendation scale between 0- 10.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

The internal systems are sound and the publicly available information is appropriate and adequate. [The website has a separate area dealing with quality assurance and accreditation that includes a comprehensive quality manual as referenced in the SER.](#)

Whilst the NPS survey is useful for marketing purposes it does not necessarily relate to quality improvement processes or outcomes. A low score could be an indicator of the need for improvement but a high score should be viewed with caution without further detailed analysis.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

(1) Factual situation

Student feedback is provided in a number of ways including representation on the appropriate university committees, module questionnaires on completion of each module, and further university wide questionnaires including alumni surveys, graduate destination data and so on.

Student feedback occurs informally at the course level through direct communication between staff and students, programme directors meet students on an informal basis to discuss particular or any issues that require intervention.

(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis

In discussion with the students they clearly have a very positive view of the institution and the programmes. The one exception was students who expressed concern over the new enterprise programme where it was felt that some of the more experimental initiatives needed time to become established as part of the overall delivery.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The newly created position of accreditation director provides oversight and development of the quality assurance processes.
2. The strength of the relationship between institution, staff and students, alumni and social partners at the programme level.
3. The student engagement and representation in the institutional deliberative structures.
4. The encouragement an opportunity for direct informal feedback and communication between staff and students.
5. Very positive student views of the institution and the programmes.

(2) Weaknesses: The need to reconcile the student feedback and how it directly contributes to the further development of the student experience.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The sense of vision of being "one step ahead" creates an environment of flexibility and creativity in responding to the rapidly changing business dynamics and the labour market. This focus on the real world with opportunity for enterprise and innovation is to be commended as an example of excellence and international best practice.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the learning outcomes be reviewed to update and to ensure that they best reflect the intended level and complexity of the intended outcomes. 2. That in reviewing the learning outcomes they better reflect and capture the "added value" that is recognised by the students and faculty. This would ensure that there are more of a reflection of the one step at vision of the institution. 3. The University consider how they could extend the range of the "Certificates of Specialisation" in providing added value to the graduate and debts to their CVs. 4. That the opportunity for additional electives initiated as cooperative developments with students, social partners and other academic partners be further developed across the range of business studies provision including the EMBA.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opportunities are considered to develop excellent research that can be published in international high-level journals 2. To keep under review the new enterprise innovation programme to ensure that the academic rigour is highlighted within the context of the experiential learning programme f that is an important in the learning and teaching delivery. 3. That use is made of the highly flexible faculty model in reviewing and focusing the research outputs to ensure they are congruent with the needs of the University.
Student admission and support	<p>That the opportunities for international mobility are maintained and further developed, and that mobility opportunities are explored for the newly introduced Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme.</p>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The University consider setting business achievement goals for the students, for example to become one of the fastest growing companies in Lithuania within the next five years. 2. That the students welfare and well-being is considered in supporting them in engaging with the dynamics of the entrepreneurial and innovative approach to learning and teaching. 3. That the tension between academic results and the development of the student competencies required of the labour market is kept under review.

Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That there should be a focus on increasing the quality of the research outcomes through papers published in journals with high impact sectors and improving the position of ISM authors as either the first or the last. 2. That further internationalisation and the use of international networks is used in the development and future positioning of the research outcomes. 3. That there may be a need to re-orientate research incentives to focus on the Kings of the relevant journals. Further incentives may be appropriate for young researchers who have yet to have the opportunity of contributing to international research projects where specific financial reports to attending international conferences can be valuable.
Learning facilities and resources	<p>That the high quality resources available to the staff and students are maintained and developed as part of the ongoing commitment to improvements.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a more formalised systematic and robust approach to the collection, analysis and evaluation of feedback would be more transparent to all stakeholders and support the institutional culture that seeks continuous improvement. 2. That the relationship between the different forms of student feedback and how that intern contributes to the further development of the student experience would be a useful tool for the institution in the further developments of the programmes.

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field *Business* at ISM University of Management and Economics:

The panel recognised a strong institutional culture that clearly fosters opportunities for experiment, flexibility and creativity in responding to the rapidly changing needs of the business world. This then leads to a real and commendable focus on transforming business education to meet the needs of the real world, whilst maintaining academic rigour and credibility and reputation of a very well respected institution.

The University has the characteristics of an institution that "learns by doing" and creates opportunity for faculty to take ownership of their courses, their assessments and their workload to the benefits of the programmes and the resultant students experience. It is evident that this culture of enterprise and development is present in all stakeholder groups who have an enthusiasm and willingness to participate as co-creators in the learning processes.

The learning outcomes of the study programmes are a reflection of where the programmes are now but as yet do not capture the real added value offered, nor the aspirations for lifelong learning to support the students through their professional journey post graduation. The creative and innovative approaches to learning and teaching provides the flexibility to create different dynamics that supports the willingness to experiment and opportunity to take risks in seeking to enhance the students learning experiences.

The very positive relationships with business partners across the range of interactions from internships, research projects, consultancies and case studies is evidence of the added value to both the student and how that directly benefits the business community. In linking the world of business and commerce directly to the classroom this ensures that students can demonstrate the important employability skills and competencies that make them very employable on graduation.

The evidence of the enthusiasm to create a common culture and a shared DNA generates a high sense of confidence and awareness that the student experience is more than just the programme content but the wider skills and values of attitude, enthusiasm, being curious and analytical, and improving business for the wider good.

The common tensions that arise between teaching and research were noted, but it was evidenced that the engagement in research and consultancy is reflected in the teaching and that this in turn enhances the wider student experience and opportunity through that relationship with industry.

Attention should be paid to formalising some of the aspects of stakeholder feedback in the quality assurance processes. This is to ensure that all of the stakeholders are kept informed and engaged with how that feedback has been acted upon in improving the programmes and

the overall student experience. This though should not be in the expense of losing the opportunity for informal feedback that is clearly valued by the stakeholders and the students.

It will be important in maintaining the "one step ahead" vision for the University that future growth is carefully managed to ensure that the core values, currently well in evidence, are not lost in the pursuit of that growth.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Peter A. Jones