

## The Assessment Decision of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education

12/10/2015

**A proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of  
Moldova**

**NOT TO ACCREDIT**  
**the Master's study programme "Business Law" of  
Alecu Russo State University of Bălți**

Acting in accordance with the authorization granted by the § 10 (4) of the Universities Act and sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) and based on section 33.2 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education shall state the following.

1. On February 23, 2015, the Director of EKKA approved by her order the following composition of the

#### **Assessment Committee:**

<b>Aalt Willem Heringa – Chair</b>	Professor of (Comparative) Constitutional and Administrative Law, Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, Holland
<b>Aušra Rauličkyte</b>	Adviser to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova
<b>Aliis Liin</b>	Legal Counsel, University of Tartu, Estonia
<b>Stela Buiuc</b>	Deputy Director, Centre for Legal Approximation, Ministry of Justice, Moldova; PhD Student, Law Department, State University of Moldova

2. The Assessment Visit to Alecu Russo State University of Bălți took place on May 20, 2015.
3. The Assessment Committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA on July 6, 2015. The Assessment Committee received the comments of Alecu Russo State University of Bălți on

July 22, 2015 and approved the final version of the component assessments on September 9, 2015.

4. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the assessment report containing the component assessments to the members of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on September 24. The assessment report forms an integral part of the assessment decision. The report will be made available on the EKKA website.

**5. The component assessments were as follows:**

<b>Study programme and its development</b>	Does not conform to requirements
<b>Teaching and learning</b>	Does not conform to requirements
<b>Teaching staff</b>	Partially conforms to requirements
<b>Students</b>	Partially conforms to requirements
<b>Resources</b>	Partially conforms to requirements

6. The EKKA Quality Assessment Council discussed the assessment report along with the comments of Alecu Russo State University of Bălți and other relevant materials at its session on October 12, 2015 with the participation of 9 Council members. The Council decided to point out the following strengths and areas of improvement of the Master's study programme "Business Law":

**6.1.**

<b>Study programme and its development</b>	<b>Does not conform to requirements</b>
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Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The strategic planning of the development of the study programme is informal; there has been no actual developing of the study programme since 2009.
- The title, content and learning outcomes of the study programme are not consistent. If the current programme is intended to be a Business Law programme, the content should be revised accordingly and business law oriented courses should be added. If, however, the programme is intended to have private law content then the title should be changed accordingly.
- The content of the study programme does not enable the achievement of the learning outcomes stated in the Education Plan. It is recommended to reflect critically on the content of the programme and its constituent courses, rephrase the learning outcomes and adjust these to the programme.
- The study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week – being clearly too low – and this is not sufficient for a full-time programme. It is necessary to increase the study-load and challenges of the students. It is highly recommended to analyse the content of the programme from the point of view of how all specific courses contribute to achieving

the learning outcomes of the whole study programme. If necessary, the scope of some courses could be reduced, making room for new ones.

- There is no actual cooperation with the representatives of the labour market regarding the development of the study programme. It is not clear what the expectations of the labour market are.
- The teaching staff is aware of the objectives of their own courses, but they have not been thinking how their courses contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the whole study programme. It is recommended to create conditions that are conducive to raising the awareness of teaching staff about the objectives of the programme.
- The MA theses contain almost nothing based on international literature other than that published in Romania and Russia. It is recommended to set the requirements for the MA thesis to use at least some sources in the English or French languages as one of the main sources of the thesis.
- It is necessary to improve the foreign language skills of the staff and students.
- It is recommended to build in the programme specific elements that are geared towards academic research and may entice students' interest in a pursuit of doctoral studies.

## 6.2.

<b>Teaching and learning</b>	<b>Does not conform to requirements</b>
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### Strengths

- The electronic feedback system is commendable.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The use of modern and interactive teaching strategies is very limited. The teaching methods focus on improving the practical skills of the students. It is recommended to introduce a regular course for the teaching staff about modern and interactive teaching methods to encourage them to use these in the teaching process.
- The period of internship is too short for 10 ECTS. It is recommended to analyse the duration of the internship and the volume of work the students have to do during the internship and adjust them so that the weekly workload of the students would be reasonable and achievable.
- The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired. It is highly recommended to analyse speedily the grading system and the practice of implementing this system and give the teaching staff instructions about its correct implementation. If really the reason for high grades is the outstanding performance of almost all of the students, the level of teaching at this MA programme is undoubtedly too low and should be revised.

- In writing their MA theses, students use outdated materials, the vast majority of the references are to the sources published more than 10 years ago and earlier. There are no references to the materials in the English language and the other foreign languages besides Russian. It is recommended to introduce staff and students to the resources of electronic legal databases and teach to use them. Furthermore, investment in the library is needed.
- There is no evidence of cooperation with employers or partner organizations offering internship opportunities for the students of the “Business Law” MA programme. It is recommended to introduce the activities of the University in the field of business law and the Business Law MA programme to potential employers and to establish a network of partner organisations in the field of business law.
- It is recommended to encourage academic mobility and implement the national legislation by creating a transparent and internationally comparable system of recognising prior learning experience acquired abroad or in other Moldovan universities as fulfilling parts of the study programmes.
- The achievement of learning outcomes is not analysed. It is recommended to make the analysis of achievement of learning outcomes a systematic procedure and use those analysis as well as feedback gathered from the students and employers for building up the continuous process of developing the study programme.
- The students are not involved in research and development activities to a sufficient extent.
- The satisfaction of the students with the quality of supervision is not measured. It is recommended to systematically gather feedback about the satisfaction with the quality of supervision from the students after they have defended their thesis and use this feedback for improving the skills of supervision of the teaching staff.
- It is recommended to publish all the regulations about study management on the website.

### 6.3.

<b>Teaching staff</b>	<b>Partially conforms to requirements</b>
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#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Because of the wide scope of the programme and the link between research and teaching in a master programme, the present staff size is too small to be able to teach a full-fledged master programme with all its specialised master courses. Therefore, it is highly recommended that staff is expanded with specialist expertise.
- There is lack of participation in international research projects and networks. International mobility must be enhanced and promoted and visiting staff from a diversity of foreign countries ought to be invited and given a role in the programme. It could also be considered to invite practitioners as guest lecturers to various courses of the programme. Both exchanges can assist in improving the courses and the teaching and the research and can link the programme to best practices elsewhere.

- The financial burden of participation in the international scientific conferences and publication of scientific articles is resting on lecturers. It is recommended to find resources at the institutional/Faculty level to support the participation of lecturers in international scientific conferences.

#### 6.4.

<b>Students</b>	<b>Partially conforms to requirements</b>
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##### Strengths

- The admission requirements are clear and transparent.
- There are good cooperation relations and mobility opportunities with universities from Romania.

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Currently there are no well-established, effective systems for students' counselling. It is necessary to have in place well-established systems for career guidance, psychological counselling and a tracking mechanism for monitoring the career development of the graduates.
- The various student mobility opportunities offered by the University have not been used or applied for by the students of the "Business Law" master's programme. The University is recommended to implement the activities pursuant to the existing cooperation agreements with the universities from Romania and seek ways to extend its cooperation relations with institutions from the other EU countries.
- The university has no specific anti-plagiarism software in place. The University is recommended to enhance its system and to speedily put in use a full-fledged and effective anti-plagiarism software.
- Currently, no well-established tracking mechanism of the graduates' employment and on their career evolution is in place. The plans of the University to create a career guidance centre and an alumni association are encouraged in order to deal with monitoring the career development of its graduates and help establishing better cooperation with the labour market.

#### 6.5.

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Partially conforms to requirements</b>
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##### Strengths

- The Business Law programme is run on a small sized facility of a truly campus University. This has many benefits for an academic programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The admission numbers are below the minimum requirements set for a student group and the numbers are clearly declining, making this programme less sustainable than the Criminal Sciences and Criminology programme.
  - The funds available are too scarce to support a full-fledged master programme. In order to meet all requirements and to be able to structurally offer an academic level master programme, more resources are necessary. Without these the programme will struggle to meet the minimum standards if it at all can meet them.
  - It is recommended to invest in the information systems and make these information systems part of decision-making about programmes and courses, study load, careers and drop-out rates.
  - There is a need to invest in the library with the purchase of up-to-date literature and foreign books and periodicals.
- 7.** According to section 33.2 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", if at least one of the component assessments "does not conform to requirements", the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education not to accredit the study programme.
- 8.** Taking into account the component assessments referred to in clause 5 and that:
- The title, content and learning outcomes of the study programme are not consistent.
  - The content of the study programme does not enable to achieve the learning outcomes stated in the education plan.
  - The study-load of the students is not more than 20 hours per week – being clearly too low – and this is not sufficient for a full-time programme.
  - There is no actual cooperation with the representatives of the labour market regarding the development of the study programme.
  - The period of internship is too short for 10 ECTS.
  - The average grades of the students are unreasonably high. The implementation of the grading system does not make it possible to distinguish the students according to their knowledge acquired.
  - There is no evidence of cooperation with employers or partner organizations offering internship opportunities for the students.
  - In writing their MA theses, students use outdated materials, the vast majority of the references are to the sources published more than 10 years ago and earlier. There are no references to the materials in the English language and the other foreign languages besides Russian.

- The students are not involved in research and development activities to a sufficient extent and the satisfaction of the students with the quality of supervision is not measured.
- Present staff size is too small to be able to teach a full-fledged master programme with all its specialised master courses.
- Currently there are no well-established, effective systems for students' counselling.
- The student mobility opportunities offered by the University have not been used or applied for by the students of this programme.
- The admission numbers are below the minimum requirements set for a student group and the numbers are clearly declining.

**the Council DECIDED**

**To make a proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova not to accredit the Master's study programme "Business Law" of Alecu Russo State University of Bălți.**

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

**9. Contestation:**

**9.1.** Evaluation proceedings conducted by EKKA may be disputed if the proceedings do not comply with the procedure provided for in this document. The challenge is filed with the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation within 30 working days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.

**9.2.** The assessment decision by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be disputed after adoption of the corresponding administrative decision by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova.

**Tõnu Meidla**  
**Chair of the Council**

**Hillar Bauman**  
**Secretary of the Council**