



STUDIŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

ALYTAUS KOLEGIJOS
***PREKYBOS VADYBOS* PROGRAMOS (65303S137,
653N14004)**
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
of ***TRADE MANAGEMENT* (65303S137, 653N14004)**
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Alytus College

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Prekybos vadyba</i>
Valstybinis kodas	65303S137, 653N14004
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	verslas
Studijų programos rūšis	koleginės studijos
Studijų pakopa	pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinės (3), iššęstinės (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais ¹	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	verslo profesinis bakalaūras, vadybos ir verslo administravimo profesinis bakalaūras, vadybininkas
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2002-06-25

¹ – vienas kreditas laikomas lygiu 40 studento darbo valandų

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Trade Management</i>
State code	65303S137, 653N14004
Study area	social sciences
Study field	business
Kind of the study programme	college studies
Level of studies	first
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (3), part-time (4)
Scope of the study programme in national credits ¹	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	professional bachelor in business, professional bachelor in management and business administration, manager
Date of registration of the study programme	25-06-2002

¹ – one credit is equal to 40 hours of student work

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I. INTRODUCTION

Alytus College is a state college of higher education in Southern Lithuania. It provides higher education and professional qualifications and fosters a flexible, responsive approach to the needs of the economy. It had 1606 students in total in 2009; the total is now 1573 students, a small decline overall.

The self-evaluation drawn up by the College is for the professional bachelor degree programme *Trade Management* within the study field of business. The programme is offered in the Department of Management and Administration and within the Faculty of Management. The self-evaluation group was under the control of College Director doc. Danute Remeikiene. It contained seven college leaders including members of the Academic Board and social partners and a year 3 student. A self-evaluation sub-group was established to carry out a detailed and competent analysis of the *Trade Management* programme. The self-evaluation took six months from December 2009.

The external evaluation by a team of international experts took place in October 2010. The site-visit to the College was on Tuesday 12 October. The expert team leader was Dr. Michael Emery and the other team members were Professor Volker Gehmlich, Dr. Maik Huettinger, Mr. Brian O'Connor, and Mr. Saulius Olencevicius. A meeting was held after the site-visit to finalise the experts' judgements and the report.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

1.1. Programme demand, purpose and aims

1.1.1. Uniqueness and rationale of the need for the programme

The aim is to provide theory and practical knowledge in trade management. Company managers confirmed to the expert team that they need such graduates. The average employment rate for the programme according to the teachers was a high 84%. The self-evaluation admits that there are similar programmes elsewhere in Lithuania but the differences are conditioned by regional needs. It is claimed by the College that sales managers with non-university higher education can work widely in wholesale, retail and commercial enterprises; the meeting with employers confirmed this view. They stated that the market was dynamic and there was a continual demand for the graduates.

1.1.2. Conformity of the programme purpose with institutional, state and international directives

The programme's purpose reflects the College's mission in that it trains required sales specialists for this southern region. The programme students are provided with independent, individual, and critical attitudes that all reflect institutional and state requirements. They are taught by practitioners experienced in the sales business who foster these attitudes.

1.1.3. Relevance of the programme aims

The relevance of the programme is confirmed by the demands of the Alytus and southern Lithuanian labour markets which includes the identification of growth in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Six international comparisons were also identified as positively influencing development of this sales programme and providing some international employment opportunities of the graduates. This internationalism should be enhanced.

1.2. Learning outcomes of the programme

1.2.1. Comprehensibility and attainability of the learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes focus on knowledge, cognitive abilities, practical skills and transferable skills for jobs in Trade Management and sales. Knowledge and gaining general and professional competences (planning, organising, managing, and controlling) are the key outcomes for this programme. These outcomes are attainable when the students complete this programme, one that combines theory with practice. More needs to be undertaken to relate these outcomes to subject content, teaching methods, and means of assessment as suggested by the Bologna Accord.

1.2.2. Consistency of the learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of the subjects are consistent with those of the programme. These are described in the relevant subject descriptors and follow the guidelines of the Bologna Accord of 1999. However, the experts recommended that use of the term 'learning outcomes' needs to be more embedded, rather than 'goals', and the outcomes be more clearly and absolutely linked to subject content, teaching methods and assessment criteria.

1.2.3. Transformation of the learning outcomes

The Department of Management and Administration surveys the demands of business annually. This informs the Department as to the appropriateness of the learning outcomes. The data is fed to the Committee of the Trade Management Study Programme that is responsible for implementation and quality of this programme. Recently, general and professional competences were updated and conditions for individual and team work improved as a result. However, it was discovered by the experts that small group work could be more effectively used in the teaching of sales techniques and this should be implemented more often.

2. Curriculum design

2.1. Programme structure

2.1.1. Sufficiency of the study volume

The programme is sufficient to satisfy the 2005 legal requirements. It is 120 credits over 3 (continual) or 4 (extended) years. With full-time, the volume is 85.8% mandatory subjects, 9.2% alternative, and 5% optional. There are not above 7 subjects taught per semester and all theoretical subjects are completed by examination. There are 3 course professional papers. With the extended part-time programme, contact work by volume is 38.5% as per the legal requirements as compared to 57.2% of the full-time programme. The programme volume enables the learning outcomes to be met which, in turn, enable the graduates to find relevant employment in Trade Management and sales areas.

2.1.2. Consistency of the study subjects

All subjects whether general or professional contribute to the student attaining the learning outcomes and finding a job in trade management and sales areas and, at the same time, comply with the Professional Training Standards. The sequence in which the subjects are taught from general to specific are helpful to the attainment of the learning outcomes, as indicated by the programme's teaching and learning strategies – but more preciseness in the use of correct terminology would help, as already indicated.

2.2. Programme content

2.2.1. Compliance of the contents of the studies with legal acts

As indicated above in 2.1.1, both the 3 year full-time and the 4 year part-time programmes satisfy the legal acts of 2005. They also satisfy the legal requirements of the study field. The experts confirm that this programme also reflects the 6th level of the European Qualification Framework and sub-level B which defines the professional competences at undergraduate level.

2.2.2. Comprehensiveness and rationality of programme content

The teaching and learning methods used relate directly to the type of class and subject. Clearly, with practice, for example, teacher supervision is paramount. However, some subjects are too brief and have minimal content and credits. The Department plans to join these to other subject areas where appropriate and introduce more innovative teaching methods. The expert team supports the merger of small subjects and, as indicated, recommends greater use of small group teaching overall. Additionally, the use of English is suggested for some teaching in order to help 'internationalise' this programme when staff abilities and confidence improve overall. The students welcomed this suggestion.

General subjects have less importance in similar programmes in other European countries. However, the employers stated to the experts that the general subjects offered in the programme were essential in developing a more rounded employee.

3. Staff

3.1. Staff composition and turnover

3.1.1. Rationality of the staff composition

Staff are qualified for this programme – 3 doctors, 1 PhD student, and 29 masters. Almost 80% of staff have at least 3 years relevant practical experience in the trading environment. With the extended study mode, the ratio teachers to students is 1:3. With final thesis, 1 teacher cannot have above 8 students. In the full-time programme, 88% staff are full-time, and only 12% part-time. The part-time staff are practising professionals and supervise the practical professional training as well as teaching relevant professional subjects. Overall, the experts believe that staff composition is rational and suitable for this programme.

3.1.2. Turnover of teachers

Academic staffing is stable. They are motivated by preparing self-study materials, undertaking applied research and occasional international projects. Recently, 4 visiting lecturers were appointed. Should further staff be appointed, the experts recommend appointing those that are not only well qualified at doctoral level with academic and business experience, but have strong English and foreign language abilities (eg. Russian) to 'internationalise' this programme.

3.2. Staff competence

3.2.1. Compliance of staff experience with the study programme

In addition to prior stated data, over 50% of staff have above 20 years relevant work experience. Seventeen took part in enhancing their competence in respect of managerial and communication skills gained by quantitative and qualitative research relevant to their teaching on this programme. Practitioners assisting with practice placement supervision all have current sales experience in trading companies. The students strongly approved of this and valued the practitioners highly. Those staff teaching theoretical subjects also have some relevant practical experience.

3.2.2. Consistency of teachers' professional development

This is regulated the College Teachers' Assessment and Position Holding Regulations and other regulations. The most valuable development force is the teacher's commitment to life-long learning, as suggested in the Bologna Accord. For example, 8 staff studied for second masters degrees. Non-formal development comes through taking part in internships, seminars, and training courses. Some are involved in preparing distance-learning materials. All of these activities are confirmed by the expert team from its site visit meetings and are assisting in taking the staff forward in their teaching. This should be continued.

4. Facilities and learning resources

4.1. Facilities

4.1.1. Sufficiency and suitability of premises for studies

19 rooms are used for theoretical studies and 5 for practical training. Overall, they are in good order and provide a good learning environment. Rooming at the town campus site was also of very good order. There are some 500 work places spread across these rooms of differing sizes from 30 to 120 places, including some appropriate for seminar and small group work. Hygiene requirements are accorded in full. These conditions, and together with the main campus grounds, make for a very good learning environment.

4.1.2. Suitability and sufficiency of equipment for studies

All theoretical teaching classes have computers, multimedia, interactive boards and either LCD TV or conference boards. The expert team confirms that they are suitable for carrying out the studies. As classes are also held on Saturdays, some opening hours are provided – 0800 – 1400 hours, plus an extra 6 hours during examinations. The use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) features strongly in the students' preparation for work.

4.1.3. Suitability and accessibility of the resources for practical training

There has been a recent update in equipment for practical training to enable students to improve their competences such as for practical entrepreneurship. Several students and graduates stated to the experts that they wished and are having their own businesses. A new accounting programme 'Rivile' has been purchased. However, the self-evaluation states that the computers in the finance accounting room need updating and the experts recommend such action. Contour Enterprise is also to be purchased for business management training.

At the town campus, there is a language laboratory. More should be made of this for developing student and staff abilities in foreign languages, particularly English and Russian, as recommended by the employers to the expert team to support the economy.

4.2. Learning resources

4.2.1. Suitability and accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications

In September 2009, the library contained some 49,000 publications. Some publications for the special professional part of the programme are updated. Some textbooks are similarly updated; for example, with Ilona Bucuniene's Sales Management textbook. There is sufficient such books for the programme's students. Free-access databases and electronic journals are extremely popular with students, as is the licenced EBSCO Publishing database package.

Overall, however, the experts strongly recommend that more needs to be made of the library with adding more up-to-date international books and journals. Too often the experts found books on the shelves that were published in the 1990's and sometimes earlier.

4.2.2. Suitability and accessibility of learning materials

Subject teachers on the programme have prepared and produced teaching and learning methodological works. Such materials comprise assignments, instructions for course papers, and details for laboratory work. These materials are available at any time for student independent work in the library and through the intranet and the students confirmed their usage. Once again, the correct terminology of 'learning outcomes' needs to be used in these materials to reflect the recommendations of the Bologna Accord and linked directly to assignment criteria and teaching methods.

5. Study process and student assessment

5.1. Student admission

5.1.1. Rationality of requirements for admission to the studies

Admission requirements are competitive. The entrance mark for the school examination are Maths 0.4 coefficient, Foreign Language 0.2, Lithuanian Language 0.2, and final year History assessment also 0.2. These also apply to working applicants for extended studies – there is no differentiation currently. The 2009 admissions indicated the continued demand for the programme despite a downturn in the economy. The graduates and employers both indicated a strong need for this sales programme to the expert team, even with national unemployment at 15%.

5.1.2. Efficiency of enhancing the motivation of applicants and new students

The College actively recruits. There is a medley of events comprising mobile exhibitions, school careers meetings, Open Door Days at the College, as well as individual careers consultations for interested parties. Current students confirmed the usefulness of this medley of activities to the expert team. The College's website contains accessible and current details about entrance. Additionally, some scholarships are available as are Erasmus exchanges – though much more needs to be made of this opportunity by the students. All of this medley has proved reasonably effective over the years in attracting a regular intake of new students. This attraction is continued once studies start by staff checking on student satisfaction with their Trade Management programme.

5.2. Study process

5.2.1. Rationality of the programme schedule

The number of contact hours reflects the mode of study, full or part-time. The student workload is rational, for example, the maximum daily hours are usually 6, with a maximum of 8. Occasionally, students are taught by another faculty but only in lunch hours. At the end of each semester, there are examination classes with at least 2 days allowed for preparation; there is an average of 5 or 6 examinations per session so all is rational. The experts commend the planning, taking into account student needs.

5.2.2. Student academic performance

The numbers of students graduating is broadly the same over several years at about 24 graduates. The student drop-out rate is low on the full-time mode and, if any, due to personal problems, leaving the country, and health issues. To sustain the student performance, the Department tries to discuss their programme with the students regularly and relate this to their career aspirations and relevant research possibilities. The students stated that academic support was readily available to them.

5.2.3. Mobility of teachers and students

To assist internationalism, the College encourages staff exchanges. There were 4 exchanges in 2009-10, but all to Turkey. There were 2 in-coming staff from Holland. This leads to improving the quality of the programme and improvement in the content. But, much more encouragement is needed to 'internationalise' this programme. The lack of exchange may be due in part to the lack of foreign language abilities and lack of confidence. The College has applied for funding to improve the abilities and the programme's internationalism. Courses are to start in December. Foreign language learning materials are available at the College so is the language laboratory yet unfortunately, and as stated in the self-evaluation and fully confirmed by the experts, foreign language abilities are insufficient across this programme and should be improved.

5.3. Student support

5.3.1. Usefulness of academic support

Academically, and as noted, the students are supported reasonably well. They communicate with many staff including teachers and group tutors. Their opinion is sought through questionnaires and surveys. Senior staff regularly consult students about their studies. Messages are passed via emails. Employers accept students for practice. Aid is provided on writing CVs. Students may have individual timetables. Academic failure can be corrected as a generous 2 failings are permitted. Quite recently, however, in 2007-08 there was significant academic failure at 8.2%. This needs rectifying, improvements made, and kept under review because for these graduates sales jobs are available at the moment.

5.3.2. Efficiency of social support

Drop-out rates are high on the extended studies programme. Recently, the rate was 29%. Drop-out is mainly in year 1 at 23%, whereas in years 2 and 3 only 2%. The reasons have been identified as financial problems, academic performance, leaving the country to work abroad, and unsympathetic employers refusing time to sit examinations. Consequently, more social, and some academic, support is needed to address this issue in the extended studies programme. In other countries, when there are similar drop-out rates the problem is very closely monitored over a number of years.

There is continual social support by group tutors who organise group events. Psychological assistance and careers advice is provided. Sporting and cultural groups are also available such as basketball and the choir. Students may enter a range of competitions and celebrate International Students Day. Some grants linked to academic performance or disability are provided. Hostels are available for both full and part-time students and meals can be taken. In fact, similar support throughout is provided to the part-time extended studies students. But, as indicated, social support needs 'fine-tuning' in respect of any students dropping out.

5.4. Student achievement assessment

5.4.1. Suitability of assessment criteria and their publicity

The students confirmed that they understood the assessment criteria and its link to the attainment of the learning outcomes. The assessments are based on the accumulative grade at the end of semesters and these contribute to the final assessment, together with the examinations weighted as 0,6 coefficient. The criteria are provided to the student by the teacher at the start of semesters. Details are also provided electronically. Once again, the correct terminology should be used at all times as indicated previously.

5.4.2. Feedback efficiency

Feedback is deemed a priority by staff and students alike. Feedback is provided individually, in groups or by distance learning – emails. This was confirmed to the experts by the students. An Assessment Board provides feedback on the final project and based on a 10-point scale, the average grade being 7-8 points, thus, satisfactorily there is a reasonable spread of grades, as experts normally expect.

Overall, students and graduates provided confirmation of a satisfactory feedback system operating. If there was a problem, then an individual consultation would be provided by the subject teacher.

5.4.3. Efficiency of final thesis assessment

Each member of the Assessment Board gives their own grading. The final grading for the student is based on the consent of all Board members. This system provides an effective final project assessment and overall consistency. This final project is appropriately written in the final seminar when the student can use the full knowledge, practical experience, and creativity ingested from the study programme.

Of the 31 project theses provided the experts, there was a spread of grades between 7 and 10, with the average being 8.5, which is the median of the spread. Summaries are provided in English and the average length of the project theses is over 50 pages with diagrams and appendices. Many theses had a short list of sources, sometimes only 10. The expert team recommends that there are more sources used on average, up to 30, and the summaries should have more precise conclusions generally, with specific enforceable recommendations. Sufficient feedback is provided when the student defends the project thesis.

5.4.4. Functionality of the system for assessment and recognition of achievements acquired in non-formal and self-education

Due to the current pursuit of life-long learning, there is internationally a growing recognition of non-formal and informal education. This is present in the UK and other western countries. The assessment of such activities as presenting at seminars and conferences is added to the formal assessment of the subjects for this programme. Consequently, the grades are sometimes improved by the non-formal and informal assessments. Again, this is an internationally accepted case and in line with the Bologna Accord.

5.5. Graduates placement

5.5.1. Expediency of graduate placement

Some 84% of the programmes' graduates are employed. This is in keeping with the national figures for sales management. Some of this employment comes from the student practice placement. The self-evaluation states that more attention must be given to practical skills training and student motivation for independent working. The employers try to give attention to these two features when the student is on practical placement.

As indicated, these students are highly employable and at the end of their study programme obtain jobs in the Trade Management field. Some are able to continue in jobs after their placement. A wide range of sales jobs locally and with a few international companies are obtained. As stated by the graduates to the experts, these jobs include selling tyres, selling tooling for furniture manufacture, selling and transporting Russian oil, and selling 'stag parties' to the UK and Russia – all highly successful outcomes, indicating an entrepreneurial ability in some cases.

6. Programme management

6.1. Programme administration

6.1.1. Efficiency of the programme management activities

The Committee of the Trade Management programme are responsible for the implementation of the programme and its quality assurance. The Committee's coordinator is responsible for the programme's coordination, content, updating, and improvement. The coordinator is apparently fully aware of labour market trends. Any suggested programme changes or quality issues go before a series of committees and official bodies. This must be quite a difficult task for the coordinator, but it is a structured system and well 'oiled' system and one that works efficiently.

6.2. Internal quality assurance

6.2.1. Suitability of the programme quality evaluation

The quality control mechanism is again a structured one. There have been changes made, indicating efficiency and providing reduced costs. The Department of Quality Assurance is at the linchpin of the process, as indicated by the detail supplied in the self-evaluation and confirmed in the experts' discussions with staff and students. Quality assurance is to improve and assist; here it does. The wealth of detail provided by the individual subject sheets ensures that quick and easy checks can be made on overall programme implementation and quality.

6.2.2. Efficiency of the programme quality improvement

The Board supplies proposals for a plan of action to remove any identified faults in the programme, be they subject content or quality matters. Improvements have occurred ranging highly diversely from improved accommodation, now some really good rooms, and some increase in staff awareness of the need for greater 'internationalism'. Differing sets of issues are relayed to a whole group of different target areas ranging from the Academic Board to ad hoc round table groups.

6.2.3. Efficiency of stakeholders participation.

Teachers take part in quality assessment and voice opinions at monthly departmental meetings. One area for improvement has been their attendance at relevant international conferences, though there needs to be much more of this.

Students are involved through their membership of a range of committees. They also discuss quality matters with senior staff. A survey was also initiated by the students to assess the quality of teaching. The College's students have a strong organisation.

The business world contributes to programme improvement. Managers from varyingly sized businesses, though normally from the niche group of small and medium-sized enterprises, are consulted. They are able to advice on the currency of subject contents and learning outcomes, all reflecting the market situations, as are the practitioner teachers too.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The experts strongly recommend that much more attention should be given to 'internationalism' of this *Trade Management* programme. More staff should confidently have better English and foreign language abilities, there should be more staff and student mobility in overseas exchanges, and more 'internationalism', should be built into the curriculum. Lithuania is an active trading country and a member of the EU. The programme needs to reflect this more.

2. More current international books and journals are needed for the library to support *Trade Management* students' learning. This would provide more up-to-date reference material for the individual subject sheets, as well as the online sources available, and is strongly recommended by the experts.

3. Modern teaching methods should be employed including small group work. This gives rise to more student expression and communication and may also involve the development of team work. Today's modern teaching should be student-centred and is a vital recommendation of the Bologna Accord.

4. Staff research activity supports their teaching and the development of this programme. More funds should be made available for this essential undertaking. It could also lead to having more doctoral staff teaching this programme and a higher quality staff helping to maintain and enhance standards on this programme. This is recommended by the expert team to enhance this programme at its core over time.

5. The current curriculum contains too many small subject areas. The experts support the Department's intention to merge some of these small subjects with other ones. This will provide a more rounded curriculum overall, one that provides more relevant knowledge and understanding.

6. The experts strongly recommend that the terminology used for the programme be updated to reflect the Bologna Accord and international standards generally. The term 'learning outcomes' needs to be fully implemented in all of its aspects; this term is now accepted worldwide and particularly so in western European countries and more effectively reflects student progress and achievement.

7. The summaries in the project theses are in English; this is good. However, these summaries often have quite general conclusions. The experts recommend that these summaries contain much more specific and precise recommendations to more fully convey the students' reasoning within the text of the project theses. This should be checked for all project theses.

8. Overall, the College's student numbers have fallen. The experts recommend that the Department closely monitors the student intake and drop-out rates for this programme in order to counteract any significant decline in student numbers on this programme, even though at the moment these sales students are in demand in the economy.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Trade Management* (state codes – 65303S137, 653N14004) is given **positive** evaluation.

Table. *Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation area	Assessment in points*
1	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2	Curriculum design	2
3	Staff	2
4	Facilities and learning resources	3
5	Study process and student assessment (student admission, student support, student achievement assessment)	3
6	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	4
	Total:	17

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

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

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

4 (very good) - the area is exceptionally good

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