CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW REPORT
Management

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Prepared by the chairperson of the expert panel:

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the *Management* study field in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): *SMK Aukštoji mokykla, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian Sport University, Kaunas University of Technology*.

The external evaluation was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania. Comprehensive external evaluation reports that include discovered strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations, were prepared for the Management study field for each evaluated HEI. Reports contain evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Management study field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of the Management study field evaluation, the expert panel has decided to give a positive evaluation to all evaluated HEIs and first cycles.

On the basis of the external evaluation reports of the study field, SKVC took a decision to accredit the study field for 7 years.

II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

This section of the Overview contains overall observations by the expert panel chair regarding the most positive aspects of the study field of Management in Lithuanian HEIs, as well as areas in need of improvement.

The expert panel comprised five senior academics from Lithuania / USA, Poland, and Latvia and one student representative from Turkey.

Based on the criteria of the evaluation, the expert panel rated the study field of management across the institutions - SMK University of Applied Sciences (SMK), Vytautas Magnus University (VDU), Lithuanian Sports University (LSU), and Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) - very highly. Based on the documentary and verbal evidence, the expert panel found that these institutions strongly represent effective, stakeholder-relevant management education programmes in Lithuania.

The highlights of the panel's conclusions include grounded and relevant teaching and learning of the core subjects of management, solid emphasis on qualitative and quantitative applied research, robust engagement with external social and industry partners, a strong emphasis on the employability of graduates, and dedicated faculty and staff members.

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

In the evaluated educational institutions, the educational programmes evaluated all set outcomes as a part of the curriculum development and delivery processes. Results are assessed at the various institutions in various ways, which are often specific to the particular mission of the institution.

The narratives provided by the institutions focused extensively on the process of acquiring evidence and justification of the types of evidence supporting programmes fulfilling societal and economic needs. In contrast, there was less elaboration of how specific evidence was used in developing student learning outcomes. Descriptions of the outcomes, when presented, lacked education-specific language supporting measurable outcomes using tools such as one or more of Bloom's taxonomies of learning (cognitive, affective, or psychomotor). A stronger adherence to educational norms for designating aims and outcomes would assist the institutions in developing measures that can be readily defined, tracked, and trended.

Outcomes assessment was not clearly described by the type and nature of the assessment, e.g., direct vs. indirect, internal vs. external, or formative vs. summative. Clarity on the type of assessment would support consideration of a more balanced set of assessment types and matching appropriate measurements to outcomes.

Explicit mapping of outcomes to the curriculum and instruction was not fully in place in all institutions. One institution had curriculum maps indicating coverage outcomes in particular courses but not identifying the nature of the coverage, e.g., introduced, reinformed, mastered, or assessed (IRMA). In credit to that institution, the faculty articulated a better overall understanding of the programme and the assessment process.

The curriculum at three of the four institutions was designed primarily based on schedule and teaching modality. One of the institutions was at the beginning of a process of implementing best-practice design models such as Universal Design for Learning and Quality Matters. In three of the four institutions, awareness of best-practice curriculum design methods and models was lacking. In those institutions, course content seems to reflect the collective experience of faculty based on their educational and job experience instead of instruction design best practices.

None of the institutions presented an assessment strategy or plan for the programmes in the management field. Although explicit planning for assessment is not a universal practice, it is often helpful to assist institutions in defining, assessing, and improving academic programmes. The lack of an explicit strategy or plan does not mean that assessment data was never used to improve the educational experience. The process of devising a strategy and plan followed by an evaluation of the level of attainment supports closing the loop on improvements in a systematic and repeatable manner. It would be of benefit for institutions to use such tools.
Common elements of assessment strategies and plans often include:

- **Assessment Methods Developed** - How will the outcomes be measured? Who will be assessed, when, and how often? (Should include some direct measures).

- **Expectations and goals.** How well should students be able to do on the assessment? (This should include numerical expectations.)
- **Results (for review).** What do the data show?
- **Description of cycles of review and use of results for improvements.** What changes to the programme or the assessment plan were made after reviewing the results? How were the results used to "close the loop" and improve the quality of the educational experience?

Suggestions for approaches to prompt institutions to consider the above points are presented in the overall recommendations.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

The appropriate type and level of faculty research or "scholarship" and student research were discussed extensively both in the Self Evaluation Reports and during the in-person meetings. All of the institutions are cognizant of the need to have faculty engage in meaningful research linked to the mission of the institution and the needs of stakeholders. Student research was also seen by all institutions as a key component of the academic programs in the management field.

In the management and business disciplines, useful research and scholarship can be challenging to clearly define. Research about organisational dynamics is more complex than many other social science disciplines. Quantitative research is often based either on financial data or surveys about perceptions or intentions and thus has very limited relevance and generalizability. Quantitative research results are often situationally specific and fail to capture the complexity of management in organisations. The positivist model of physical "science" research inherent in quantitative methods fails to address this complexity.

All of the institutions struggled with the idea of fitting management research into a purely scientific paradigm. Most aspired towards a faux scientific measurement of publications in ranked journals without articulating any link of this measurement to improved results for stakeholders and social partners. The definition of an appropriate purpose of faculty research beyond publication was not effectively expressed.

Setting the research agenda in terms of stakeholder and social partner needs is a necessary change. The research outputs would be more useful, relevant, and better aligned with graduate employment and career advancement if the purpose of research and faculty scholarship was seen as more than ranked journal publication using a single publisher's rating system, e.g., Scopus. Simply stated, the number of times academics cite themselves is not terribly relevant to the issues facing enterprises, other stakeholders, and students.

Consideration of models such as the *Engaged Scholarship* approach, developed by Andrew Van de Ven at the University of Minnesota, or the *Boyer Model of Scholarship* domains, developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, may provide guidance on a better approach. The Engaged Scholarship approach focuses on the involvement of external

stakeholders and social partners. The Boyer Model is rooted in the function of research as based on the discovery of entirely new knowledge, integration of existing knowledge, application of existing knowledge, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Publication can and should play a role in assessing the quality of research and faculty scholarship. It should not, however, serve as the sole metric for the success of research efforts. The relevance of research and faculty scholarship products should be judged first and foremost based on how well they serve the needs of stakeholders and social partners.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Admissions

All of the institutions rely primarily on domestic Lithuanian students for the major part of student cohorts. The processes documented in the Self-Evaluation Reports and verified on-site appear to comply with Lithuanian requirements. All institutions have well-developed outreach and student recruiting processes to attract new students in the Lithuanian context.

The institutions all have engaged in international student recruiting to some extent. The overall proportion of international students is relatively low for the institutions. Increasing the proportion of international students could improve the sustainability of the management programs by tapping a larger pool of potential applicants. The institutions in this review all had attractive programmes offered in English that are at a favourable price point. Although the institutions all indicated an interest in recruiting more international students, they also noted several barriers, including restrictions on student visas.

Counselling and support

The programme-related information provided to potential students focuses primarily on academic content, often without explicitly discussing career opportunities and pathways following graduation. The student support and counselling services tend to be information-rich, focusing mainly on informing students about academic content and requirements. Information is typically provided through centralised communications channels, with individualised advice usually provided by faculty.

The support and counselling services tend to fall short of providing support for students' non-academic issues. In the first cycle, students often face "coming-of-age" issues, which involve maturation challenges. Addressing these issues can be as determinative to a student's successes as counselling on academic programme selection and performance. Second-cycle students often face different non-academic issues, such as determining and acting on new career directions.

Faculty-centric student support approaches often are not designed or equipped to address either coming-of-age issues or career redirection needs. It may be helpful for the institutions to

consider using a professional counselling model with non-faculty support staff. Such a model could offer more systematic advising and counselling.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

The programmes reviewed all demonstrated innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Using models such as experiential learning and challenge-based learning has been helpful in describing and framing subject matter relevant to students, employers, and other stakeholders.

The programmes also demonstrated innovative approaches to the use of technology. All the institutions reported that coping with the transition to remote learning during the Covid pandemic has spurred increased use of online learning technologies. One institution has developed a consistent approach to all classes through structures in the Moodle platform.

The measurement of student performance still relies mainly on grades or marks. As noted in section 3.1 above, the approach to assessment lacks maturity in terms of the definition of types of assessments and appropriate use. Tying together multiple measures of student performance in assessment strategies and plans would be helpful to provide consistency across subjects and allow for determined closing-the-loop reviews.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

The teaching staff in all the programmes were shown to be highly qualified and knowledgeable of the subject matter areas taught. Students at all the institutions noted that faculty were highly engaged and interested in student progress.

A blind spot in all the institutions was faculty awareness and fluency in developed educational concepts and practices for teaching and learning. The use of advanced designs such as experiential learning and challenge-based learning was not matched with demonstrated faculty grounding in education fundamentals. During many of the interviews, many examples of excellent faculty teaching techniques were described. In some cases, those examples were clearly aligned with one of the learning models, such as experiential or challenge-based learning. There were not, however, nested in a learning model explicitly used by the institution.

Adoption of a particular learning model may help align the field of study with the mission of the institution or the aims of academic programmes. As a starting point, the institutions may wish to consider developing and articulating an overall learning model for the field of study or the institution. Walden University provides an example of such a model in its Inclusive Teaching and Learning Model. An overall model should align with the mission and aims and will guide the development of faculty capabilities in instruction and guiding learning.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Three of the four institutions visited demonstrated modern and state-of-the-art learning facilities and resources. The fourth institution had a collection of older facilities but has embarked on a capital plan to replace and renew its facilities.

The type and level of facilities and resources clearly meet or exceed the norms for excellent European higher learning institutions. One of the institutions was actively experimenting with the interplay of place, space, and learning in innovative approaches.

One challenge to all of the institutions will be staying abreast of the rapid developments in hybrid learning technologies and the companion challenge of digitisation. None of the institutions had explicit strategic or planning themes focused on the impact of digitisation. This is an area for serious consideration and study going forward.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

All of the institutions demonstrated effective quality management systems related to the study programmes. The focus was, however, still heavily skewed towards the quality of inputs such as facilities, faculty qualifications, learning materials, and technology. Outcome quality was reviewed based on direct measures such as student grades or marks and some indirect measures such as retention, persistence, and placement.

Two areas stand out as potentials for improvement in study quality management. The first area is developing more comprehensive approaches to capturing and managing the quality of teaching and learning processes. The institutions all relied on student perception feedback using surveys and peer evaluations of faculty teaching. The shortcomings of such methods are that the perceptions of students or of faculty peers often do not correlate to success in learning and applying knowledge to real-world situations. Many institutions have found that robust engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning through analysis using action learning is helpful in gaining a greater understanding of the quality of the educational process.

The second area for improvement is the lack of a consistent and generally understanding method of continuous quality improvement. Within the academic community, the PDSA approach (plan, do, study, act) is often favoured. Although PDSA has solid roots in the quality movement, it is a procedure to improve quality after selecting something to improve. Techniques such as variants of the Six Sigma DMAIC (define, measure, analyse, improve, and control) or the method used by Duke University, FADE (focus, analyse, develop, execute, evaluate), support selection and prioritisation of areas to improve, alignment of analysis tools to the task, and systematic measurement and evaluation of changes. PDSA by itself does not support the fullness of the improvement process. Coalescing and deciding on a robust improvement methodology helps to install both a language and practice of improvement.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT STUDY FIELD

Strategic recommendations at an institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions)

Specific recommendations for each subject institution are below. The topics below represent a focus on "key themes" that rest on overall areas of needed change and improvement.

SMK University of Applied Sciences (SMK)

The programmes reviewed at SMK are applied in nature and benefit greatly from the experiential learning models in use at the institution. Faculty research and scholarship, however, do not have the same level of focus towards the applied disciplines offered through experiential learning. Developing and implementing a programme of faculty research/scholarship and expectations for professional engagement could assist the institution in advancing knowledge. In particular, research models such as the Boyer Model of Scholarship or Van de Ven's Engaged Scholarship may be of particular benefit.

Vytautas Magnus University (VDU)

VDU has managed a significant combination of programmes with the merger involving Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU) and the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LEU). The challenge of such combinations of long-standing programmes and institutions is not an easy task and should not be dismissed lightly.

What was quite evident from the interviews on-site was a lack of post-merger integration into one highly functioning institution. It may be very helpful to VDU to avail itself of change management techniques and expertise on post-merger integration. There are many methods and practitioners in the field for both areas. The fact that such techniques are known to faculty does not mean that they can easily be implemented. Governance structures and assistance specific to these needs may assist with a better, more complete, and more productive organisation.

Lithuanian Sports University (LSU)

The programmes at LSU were unique among the institutions visited with their focus on sports management. The institution has embarked on a capital programme and academic programmes visioning that have significant promise for the future. A challenge for LSU is ensuring that faculty research and scholarship align with and support the institution's direction and aspirations.

Research models such as the Boyer Model of Scholarship or especially Van de Ven's Engaged Scholarship may be of particular benefit if placed in a dedicated effort to engage with the sports

management community. The potential of evidence-based management research for the large number of smaller sports organisations targeted by LSU could provide a clear differentiator for the institution's programmes and faculty.

Kaunas University of Technology (KTU)

The number and types of improvements undertaken by KTU in its efforts at additional programmatic accreditation are commendable. The quality of the programmes has clearly been improved with the aim of attaining the status of a market leader in international management education. What is now missing is a greater focus on the internationalisation of programmes, recruiting, and stakeholder engagement. Such a shift in focus represents strong potential for KTU to deliver a compelling value proposition.

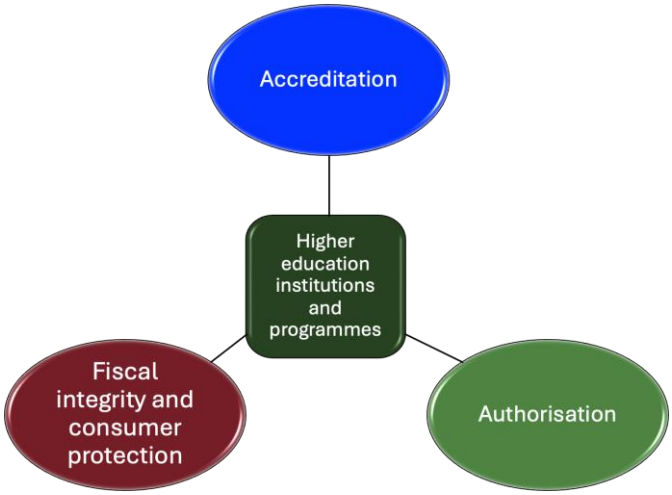
Strategic recommendations at the national level (for the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport):

In the following discussion, two areas of potential change are discussed: 1) untangling purposes of accreditation and regulation and 2) supporting a more nuanced view of research and advancing knowledge.

Untangling the purposes of accreditation and regulation.

Many of SKVC's standards and criteria are written to serve multiple purposes. Although this is understandable in the context of historical development of the European Higher Education Area, there was a demonstrable level of confusion about the differences in accreditation and regulation evident in the Self-Evaluation Reports. Regulatory approaches ensure that accountability structures and minimum inputs are in place. Accreditation, at its core, is focused on systems and structures of quality assurance rather than legal responsibility and accountability.

Within the Lithuanian context, it may be helpful to disaggregate regulatory and quality assurance aspects using a model such as the triad model used in the U.S. The triad model creates three dimensions for ensuring the quality of higher education institutions and programmes: accreditation, authorisation, and fiscal integrity/consumer protection. The diagram below illustrates the three areas.



Authorisation ensures that any institution offering higher education meets minimum standards for resources and personnel. Fiscal integrity and consumer protection elements are in place to ensure that the market and business practices of higher education institutions are ethical and meet legal norms for market transactions in the country.

When authorisation and fiscal integrity/consumer protection are separated out, accreditation can be used to ensure high quality of educational activities. Such separation also allows institutions to pursue specialised accreditation, which may be relevant to enhancing the international reputation of the programme or institution for recruitment of students or faculty.

The separation can be accomplished through the structure of standards and criteria. In the U.S., this is done using authorisation as a minimum or threshold requirement for accreditation and separately stating fiscal integrity/consumer protection elements in a separate set of criteria categories. Such a restructuring of the standards and criteria within Lithuania would allow for a sharper focus on each area and the assignment of appropriate reviewers with the required expertise.

Approaches to research and advancing knowledge

A challenge shared by all the institutions was how to focus and encourage faculty and student research or "scholarship" activity. The efficacy of policies requiring publication by faculty in peer-reviewed and ranked journals has been questioned for years within the academy.

There are two critical fallacies often noted with exclusive reliance on peer-reviewed journal publications. Firstly, academic journals are not read or used by the practitioners of management. This is in contrast, for example, to the medical field, where journals are used to inform and guide the practice of medicine. Pejoratively, one could argue that academic journals are written for academics to be used as a means to attain tenure and little else. The missing link is that the knowledge developed is not seen as relevant to the workplaces where graduates will work.

The second fallacy is that the ranking and rating methods also exist within the self-contained "academia for academics" world. This deficiency is particularly evident when the raking and rating methods are developed by publishers for what are essentially proprietary goals.

Models of open source or public infrastructure would be better suited to the problem but need to be developed. In the digital arena, there are practice examples such as the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) movement. Embracing such a movement in assessing the quality and efficacy of faculty research and scholarship would be very helpful to the management field. This is one of those areas where the size of the Baltic countries could benefit from developing and implementing such a system of open scholarship ratings and rankings.

Models such as the *Engaged Scholarship* approach, developed by Andrew Van de Ven at the University of Minnesota, or the *Boyer Model of Scholarship* domains, developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, may also provide guidance on providing orientation and direction.

Recommendations on the evaluation process for SKVC

Separating authorisation and fiscal integrity/consumer protection from accreditation

A key area for improvement in the SKVC evaluation process involves disentangling authorisation and fiscal integrity/consumer protection from the core accreditation standards and criteria. That opportunity is described above in the national-level recommendations.

Evaluation methodology

A further recommendation area is to adopt the evaluation descriptors used by performance excellence models globally. Rather than describing strengths and weaknesses, the focus of performance excellence is on strengths and improvement areas. For example, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the U.S. provides comments based on strengths and opportunities for improvement (or "OFIs") for both processes ("approach") and the outcomes ("results"). This evaluation model is coupled with numeric scoring. The scoring is guided by a process maturity model, which is based on the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) developed at Carnegie Mellon University.

The Baldrige model has been adopted by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), a specialised accreditor in the U.S.

Using these types of refined models will ensure greater consistency of evaluation in accreditation efforts as well as provide more actionable feedback to higher education institutions.

Self-Evaluation Report Length and Focus

The Self-Evaluation reports were in the range of 40,000 to 46,000 words, excluding annexes. Such a length does not exceed a typical SER's word count for an entire institutional report. In focused areas such as the field of study reviews, shorter and more focused SERs should be possible. A significant amount of text in many areas covered tangential or superfluous areas.

A maximum word count per cycle of 20,000 to 25,000 words would seem appropriate. It may also be helpful to include guidelines about addressing standards and criteria directly with key evidence rather than institutional descriptions.