

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 to ACCREDIT

the Master's study programme "Business Law"
of The University of European Political and Economic Studies
(USPEE) "Constantin Stere"
FOR 3 YEARS

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 33.4 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:

Mihai Floroiu – Chair	Professor, Head of Legal Studies Department, Faculty of Legal, Social and Political Sciences, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania
Aušra Rauličkyte	Adviser to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova
Stela Buiuc	Deputy Director, Centre for Legal Approximation, Ministry of Justice, Moldova; PhD Student, Law Department, State University of Moldova

2. The Assessment Visit to the University of European Political and Economic Studies (USPEE) "Constantin Stere" took place on May 25, 2015.

3. The Assessment Committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA on July 7, 2015. The Assessment Committee received the comments of the University of European Political and Economic Studies (USPEE) "Constantin Stere" on July 21, 2015, and approved the final version of the component assessments on August 24, 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:**

Study programme and its development	Partially conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Conforms to requirements
Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
Students	Partially conforms to requirements
Resources	Conforms to requirements

6. The EKKA Quality Assessment Council discussed the assessment report along with the comments of the University of European Political and Economic Studies (USPEE) "Constantin Stere" 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.

Study programme and its development	Partially conforms to requirements
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Areas of improvement and recommendations

- It is recommended to develop more detailed actions plans supporting the achievement of concrete aims and objectives of the strategic development plan of both the university and the Faculty, and ensure that the monitoring process of implementation of the action plans is in place and involves teaching staff, students and representatives of labour market.
- The study programme does not include optional disciplines, and is thus not in full compliance with formal requirements. It is recommended to establish optional disciplines in the Education Plan.
- There is no clear understanding among the teaching staff of the objectives and outcomes of the whole study programme. It is recommended to involve the teaching staff more closely in discussions within the Chair on the objectives of the study programme and their role in achieving these objectives.

- The student workload is not clearly regulated, and does not meet the requirement of 90 ECTS credits. It is recommended to ensure that students' workload of independent work is meeting the requirements of 90 ECTS credits by revising the teaching and learning methods and requirements. The students' internship should preferably take place in the institutions directly related with the business law application.
- Although information on labour market demands is received by the university in various ways, it is recommended to do it in a more systematic way, establishing constant channels of communication with broader number employers and social partners, reflecting needs of various business segments.
- It is recommended to provide students with possibilities to learn foreign languages, to include in the programmes of disciplines obligatory materials in foreign languages (English/French) and to encourage students to continue doctoral level studies in foreign countries.
- The implementation of the opportunities for further education on doctoral level is limited due to insufficient knowledge of foreign languages by the students, as it is an obligatory condition for being admitted to doctoral studies in the field of business law. It is recommended to introduce in the programme a special course in order to develop research skills useful for both master thesis and doctoral studies, as the research skills of the students appeared to be quite limited as was witnessed by the quality of the master thesis (not updated materials used, few resources and footnotes, etc.).

6.2.

Teaching and learning	Conforms to requirements
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- Areas of improvement and recommendations Although study materials are annually revised and renewed, the recommended bibliography and the resources that are used for the MA thesis indicate that the materials are not sufficiently updated and not sufficient enough foreign materials are used. The university is recommended to ensure that that more up-dated and diversified teaching materials are used.
- It is recommend that the university continues its efforts to ensure the transparency of the study process by publishing on its website the information related to the MA programme study plan, timetable, the developments introduced based on the feedback results, etc.
- The university is recommended to establish cooperation relations for the internship purposes with the key public authorities described in the curriculum (such as the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Agriculture) and ensure that all the internships places are related with and contribute to achieving the learning outcomes of the MA programme in Business Law.
- The university is recommended to ensure that systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes are performed and necessary improvements of the study programme and process are made.

- The involvement of the students in research activities is limited and is rather focused on the Master thesis. It is recommended to encourage students' involvement in research activities, ensure that the MA theses are more research-oriented, and improve the quality of the Master theses in terms of the used resources.

6.3.

Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Teaching staff is involved in practical activities in the field of law, even at management level of different relevant institutions (lawyers, judges).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- At the moment, the qualification of full-time teaching staff does not fully comply with legal requirements as out of the 11 full-time staff, one has not got a PhD degree yet, being only a PhD student. Therefore, the total amount of full-staff holding a PhD degree is only 91%. It is recommended to encourage the finalisation of PhD studies of one full-time member staff in order to attain the legal threshold.
- The intake of younger researchers within the programme is recommendable in order to ensure the sustainability of the study programme in the long run.
- There is no reliable information regarding the involvement of visiting members from foreign higher education institutions.
- Many of the members of the teaching staff lack motivation to go abroad in order to develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions, mainly because not all of them speak other foreign languages, apart from Russian. The university is recommended to improve foreign language skills of the academic staff and provide them opportunities to gain more international experience in terms of their involvement in international networks, participation in seminars, etc.

6.4.

Students	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- A well-functioning anti-plagiarism software is in place.
- Existence of a tracking mechanism of the graduates and an alumni association.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The number of enrolled students is not stable and varies significantly which poses some threats to the sustainability of the MA programme. Due to the small number of students, it appears that there is no real selection process and all the applicants are enrolled. The

university is recommended to consider implementing measures for ensuring the interest of potential students in the MA programme and its sustainability and promote the MA programme by considering the needs of a broader segment of the labour market.

- The foreign language skills could not be demonstrated by students and are in the urgent need of improvement.
- Currently, the career guidance centre has not been established in the USPEE. It is recommended to establish the career guidance centre as envisaged by its internal act and ensure that career guidance covers a broader spectrum of the labour market, outside the segment covered by the entities founded by/affiliated to the university.
- USPEE is recommended to offer more mobility opportunities for its MA students and establish cooperation relations with a broader range of universities, including prestigious universities from EU member states.
- No students of the MA programme have participated in mobility projects and programmes. The university is recommended to encourage students to participate in mobility programmes related to the field of law.
- The drop-out rate has substantially increased in recent years (up to 41%) and the university has to undertake effective measures to reduce it.

6.5.

Resources	Conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Study process is facilitated by well-equipped classrooms, including usage of new technologies such, as interactive boards by teachers and students alike.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

- It is recommended that the university continues its efforts to implement the Moodle platform swiftly and efficiently.
 - USPEE library does not have the access to online databases (on-line access to universities journals from different countries, books and other documents), and this is a very serious shortcoming. It is recommended to ensure the access to online databases for the teaching staff and students in the shortest possible term.
7. According to section 33.4 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", if three or four of the component assessments by an assessment committee are "partially conforms to requirements", the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of three years.

8. Taking into account the component assessments referred to in clause 5, as well as the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme,

the Council **DECIDED**

To make a proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova to accredit the Master's study programme "Business Law" at the University of European Political and Economic Studies (USPEE) "Constantin Stere" for a period of three years.

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