

Summary report on the accreditation of the study programmes at the International School for Social and Business Studies in Celje

Following the request for accreditation of the International School for Social and Business Studies from January 2014, AQ Austria conducted the accreditation procedure of the study programmes Business in Contemporary Society (First cycle study programme) and Knowledge Management (Second cycle study programme). In accordance with the "Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes" adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013, AQ Austria publishes the following summary report.

1 Short information on the application for accreditation

Information about the institution	
Institution (applicant)	International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS)
Location of the institution	Celje (Slovenia)
Information about the study programmes	
Name of the study programmes	1. Business in Contemporary Society 2. Knowledge Management
Academic degrees	1. Diplomirani ekonomist (VS) / Diplomirana ekonomistka (VS) 2. Magister managementa / Magistrica managementa

2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

ISSBS submitted an application for accreditation of the study programmes Business in Contemporary Society and Knowledge Management. The place of delivery of the study programmes is Celje.

At its meeting on 28 January 2014, the Board of AQ Austria passed the recommendation of the expert panel for the assessment of the study programmes.

Name	Institution	Role
Prof. Dr. habil. Elisabeth Fröhlich	Cologne Business School, Germany	Peer from academia
Prof. Grzegorz Mazurek, Ph.D	Kozminski University, Poland	Peer from academia, head of the expert panel
Mag. Petra Wimmer, MAS	Danube University Krems, Austria	Peer from academia
Liliya Ivanova	University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria	Student expert panel member

A site visit at ISSBS took place in Celje from 16 – 17 October 2014, which was attended by all reviewers and two coordinators from AQ Austria.

The Board of AQ Austria took the accreditation decisions in its meeting on 03 February 2015. The accreditation decisions are valid as of 02 February 2021.

3 Subject matter of the application

The first cycle study programme [Business in Contemporary Society](#) is designed as a three-years programme (180 ECTS) and is offered in full-time and part-time study modes.

The following information derives from the self-evaluation report of ISSBS:

"The BCS programme is a first cycle study programme that equips students with good knowledge of business and economics and also with relevant organization, management, legal, information and communication skills, emphasizing both their theoretical and practical side. In addition to the theoretical basis, for proper operation and action that is expected of a graduate of the study programme, a bond with practice is crucial. Internship is a compulsory course of the program which establishes a link between theory and practice. Integral parts of the program are also courses in computer literacy, training for personal effectiveness and professional writing texts that promote personal effectiveness of the individual. Graduates of this program are able to critically and constructively use the knowledge, ideas and opinions and consequently make responsible decisions.

The following learning outcomes (general competencies) are developed within the BCS study programme:

- understanding of the functioning of contemporary society and the global economic environment
- understanding of the wider ethical and moral context of business, economic and social environment
- the ability to use expert terminology related to business, economics, organisation, management, law, information, communication and technology,
- a good command of the basics of research methods in business studies,
- the ability to take responsibility for their own work and the work of their team.

Graduates of the program are qualified for demanding jobs which require economic as well as business knowledge and other skills important for understanding business environment, management of business processes and functions such as: personnel, financial, purchasing, sales, marketing, accounting, etc. Graduates are trained primarily to identify, define and analytically solve business problems and challenges."

The second cycle study programme [Knowledge Management](#) is designed as a two- year programme (120 ECTS) and is offered as full-time and part-time study.

The following information derives from the self-evaluation report of ISSBS:

"Master's study programme KM integrates theory and practice of knowledge creation, knowledge management and knowledge application. It places knowledge in its social, economic, technological and research - developmental environment. It deals with the role, factors, technologies, creation, management and application of knowledge as an important performance factor of people, companies and other organisations.

Graduates of the study programme are qualified in planning, establishing and managing organisations which are to a high extent based on knowledge. In particular, students of the master KM study programme develop the following:

- the ability to analyse, synthesise and anticipate solutions and consequences of phenomena in the fields of management, economics, law and education;
- a good command of research methods, procedures and processes in social sciences, and the ability of critical and self-critical judgement in the field of social sciences;
- the ability of critical and self-critical judgement, of critical analysis and synthesis and of anticipating possible solutions and consequences;
- the ability to manage an organisation as an instrument for achieving goals and as a community of interests of those involved;
- the ability to apply knowledge of management, in particular management of knowledge organisations, in practice;
- autonomy in professional work and in business decision-making;
- the ability of ethical reflection and commitment to professional ethics;
- the ability to work in a management and expert group, and the ability to accept and take into account constructive criticism.

Graduates of the programme are qualified for more demanding jobs which require economic as well as business knowledge and other skills important for understanding and management of macro and micro economic environment, economic production processes, distribution, exchange and consumption as well as business environment. Graduates are trained to recognize, identify and solve analytical economic and business problems and challenges. They

are also qualified for senior positions in the public and private sectors as well as in profit or non-profit activities where the Knowledge and Knowledge Management is the central factor in decision-making, operations and communication with various internal and external publics".

4 Summarizing results from the assessments of the reviewers

Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

Although the study programmes were judged as good, the expert panel detected a few shortcomings. There is a weakness in the alignment of the BCS and KM study programmes to the objectives and goals of the institution namely *education excellence, research excellence, social responsibility* and *operational excellence*. These institutional goals are not reflected in the programme qualification objectives to a sufficient extent.

Research activities are judged as adequate for both study programmes whereas the fostering of social responsibility is considered to be weak.

For both programmes the learning objectives are formulated in a form which is too generic and should be further specified in terms of particular qualifications, skills and competences. The same applies to the need for a more detailed description of the target groups and the job profiles of future alumni.

For the study programme Knowledge Management, the expert panel detected inconsistencies between the title and the content of the programme and recommended a revision.

The European Credit Transfer System is implemented and fully meets the recommendations of the European Commission. The issuance of a diploma supplement is guaranteed and the workload was rated to be adequate for achieving the aspired qualification objectives; this was confirmed by students, faculty staff and university management.

Standard 2: Staff

Staff are highly qualified, show a high commitment to and responsibility for their students and they are strongly involved in the further development of the institution. A "student-centred" education is established where students appreciate the open and inclusive environment during classes.

The student-teacher ratio is very good and qualifications and competences of staff as well as the composition of personnel involved in the study programmes are assessed positively as meeting the necessary requirements for good teaching.

Standard 3: Quality assurance

ISSBS has established several instruments for quality assurance that contribute to the monitoring and enhancement of the quality of the study programmes at ISSBS. Internal stakeholders are well involved in all these measures.

The expert panel is convinced that the existing tools for quality assurance work well and enhance the quality of the study programme level. Nevertheless, neither the self-evaluation report nor the interviews provided in-depth evidence on how the different measures are linked

to a common quality management system. Several quality loops are either not closed or the documentation of these procedures is not sufficient.

Standard 4: Funding and infrastructure

Funding is tightly regulated by the Slovenian government. Funding of full-time studies is provided for the period of accreditation by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA), in accordance with the national legislation and agreement with the state. The funds are managed independently by the institution and can be used for teaching, research, library or information and organisational activities.

The available facilities are considered as adequate. The on-site library should be further equipped with international and up-to-date literature.

Standard 5: Research

The targets and perspectives for research and development for both study programmes are in line with the strategic orientation of the institution.

There is a good interaction between teaching and research staff and the participation in research projects is supported by an incentive system which is discussed with the management at yearly intervals. Research activities are well supported by the organisation and by the current structural framework at the institution.

Standard 6: National and international co-operations

ISSBS has established a number of co-operations with national and international institutions within and outside of the higher education sector and has established strong connections to the local businesses. "Guests from practice" and foreign professors are routinely involved in the educational provision. There is a limitation from Slovenian legislation on the participation of foreign professors since a Slovenian habilitation is needed to be recognised as an independent lecturer.

While the exchange and mobility of staff is well supported by academic and administrative staff, the frequency of such activity is still rather low and should be enhanced in the future.

5 Accreditation decisions and statements of grounds

At its 25th meeting on 03 February 2015, the Board of AQ Austria made the following decision:

I. **“Business in Contemporary Society”** at the International School for Social and Business Studies in Celje, Slovenia

- 1) The programme **“Business in Contemporary Society”** at the International School for Social and Business Studies in Celje, Slovenia , meets the standards of the „Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes“ (“Guideline...”) adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013.
- 2) Pursuant to 3.5 of the “Guideline...” the Board of AQ Austria grants accreditation to the programme for a period of six years, i.e. until 02 February 2021.
- 3) The Board of AQ Austria notes that the programme meets some of the standards only partially. Pursuant to 3.5 of the „Guideline...“ accreditation is therefore granted subject to fulfilment of the following conditions. The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 02 November 2015) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.

Condition 1 (standard 1)

The BCS study programme should be redesigned with a view to achieving a better alignment with the objective „understanding of the functioning of contemporary society and the global economic environment“. This should include the use of more international literature.

Condition 2 (standard 1)

Learning outcomes must be revised and specified in terms of particular qualifications, skills and competences, which students acquire by the completion of a specific course. Relevant job profiles must be considered. Further information for prospective students must be added in a clear and specified way.

Condition 3 (standard 3)

A concept must be designed where it is shown how the different QA instruments which are in place are connected with each other. The closing of quality loops for the topic “study & teaching” must be documented.

Condition 4 (standard 3)

A long-term concept for the continuous improvement of the study programme must be designed. The focus should be on how to involve all groups of internal and, in particular, external stakeholders.

At its 25th meeting on 03 February 2015, the Board of AQ Austria made the following decision:

II. "Knowledge Management" at the International School for Social and Business Studies in Celje, Slovenia

1) The programme "Knowledge Management" at the International School for Social and Business Studies in Celje, Slovenia, meets the standards of the „Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes“ ("Guideline...") adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013.

2) Pursuant to 3.5 of the "Guideline..." the Board of AQ Austria grants accreditation to the programme for a period of six years, i.e. until 02 February 2021.

3) The Board of AQ Austria notes that the programme meets some of the standards only partially. Pursuant to 3.5 of the „Guideline...“ accreditation is therefore granted subject to fulfilment of the following conditions. The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 02 November 2015) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.

Condition 1 (standard 1)

The KM study programme should be redesigned with a view to achieving a better alignment with the objective „understanding of the functioning of contemporary society and the global economic environment“. This should include the use of more international literature.

Condition 2 (standard 1)

Learning outcomes must be revised and specified in terms of particular qualifications, skills and competences, which students acquire by the completion of a specific course. Relevant job profiles must be considered. Further information for prospective students must be added in a clear and specified way.

Condition 3 (standard 1)

The KM programme must be re-designed in the way that two areas of study are additionally included: (i) knowledge-oriented management and (ii) organisational knowledge management. In both areas of study, electives should be added (offers on organisational knowledge management, information-communication systems, analysis of semantic and social networks, etc.)

Condition 4 (standard 3)

A concept must be designed where it is shown how the different QA instruments which are in place are connected with each other. The closing of quality loops for the topic "study & teaching" must be documented.

Condition 5 (standard 3)

A long-term concept for the continuous improvement of the study programme must be designed. The focus should be on how to involve all groups of internal and in particular, external stakeholders.