

Review report

**PROFESSIONAL BACHELOR OF
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT (IBM)**

10 mei 2022

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1 CONTEXT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

During the period 2015-2017, the higher education institutions are given the opportunity to prove they are capable of taking full responsibility for securing and improving the quality of their study programmes. This approach/direction is assessed in the institutional review during the 'review trail'.

In its direction, Artevelde UAS also includes the conduct of **study programme reviews**. This report is the output of the first study programme review conducted at the university of applied sciences for the study programme of the Bachelor of International Business Management (IBM).

The review took place on **20-22 April 2022**.

The committee, composed to this end, consists of **6 members** and a minutes taker.

- Peter de Boer, chairman (external committee member)
- Veerle De Frène, educational expert (internal committee member)
- Todd Thexton, field expert (external committee member)
- Klaas Vansteenhuyse, field expert (external committee member)
- Jeanette de Haan, field expert (external committee member)
- Dobrinka Barzacka, field expert (external committee member)
- Jules De Bruyckere (student committee member)

For a brief description of their CVs, see annex.

The review sources used by the committee, are:

- a completed questionnaire that can be consulted digitally on the Dinar with a link to the intranet site of the study programme;
- a self-assessment in relation to the educational framework, listing the quality requirements of the university of applied sciences;
- and a presentation of the study programme marking the start of the various consultations with the stakeholders: staff members, students, professional field and alumni.

An oral report took place on 22 April 2022, at which the department received initial feedback from the committee.

The results of the study programme review are also made public.

In response to the committee's findings, the department will write a follow-up report and monitor the implementation of its (improvement) projects via Akwaris.

2 VISION AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The university-wide plan for the future of Artevelde UAS, “Creating tomorrow’s world,” identifies four main strategic goals, which have been translated into a strategy for the Business & Management expertise network and are also aligned with the vision and structure of the International Business Management (IBM) Professional Bachelor programme.

The expertise network policy plan (2020-2025) is made more concrete through annual plans at a network and programme-level, which provide an overview of priorities per academic year.

The IBM programme has formulated its strategic pillars, composed an IBM identity, graduate profile, and an IM Horizon vision statement, which provides guidance for its curriculum redevelopment. The programme learning outcomes further drive to a great extent the structure and design of the curriculum.

The programme has established an ambitious vision and agenda for its curriculum redesign in co-creation in order to keep its content and delivery relevant. The awareness of the importance of offering a flexible and future proof curriculum is strongly reflected in the vision documents and appears to be engrained within the IBM team. A shared vision is generally apparent among the team members, however, creating a common language would be worthwhile.

It is advised to further align the content of the various vision documents to ensure consistency and to establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that allow for progress measurements, which would also enable the programme to determine specific milestones towards achieving the overarching strategic goals in relation to those of the expertise network and the entire institution.

The curriculum structure is clear and the various learning paths have been mapped. It is advised to be conscious of maximizing international classroom experiences in the curriculum structure.

A valuable next step would be for the programme to articulate a vision on internationalisation to strengthen its profile as an international programme and bring together the multitude of internationalisation activities.

IBM benefits from the support and services available through the expertise network. It is advised to ensure that there is enough attention and expertise available to support IBM’s unique international context also in times of increased pressure and demand on the central structure.

3 EDUCATION AND LEARNING PROCESS

3.1 Learning outcomes

The IBM programme is built around 19 learning outcomes, which were the result of a process of co-creation with internal and external stakeholders. The learning outcomes are linked to EFQ level 6 of the Flemish quality structure.

Learning paths have been established for each of the learning outcomes through a process of constructive alignment.

Discussions with alumni and work field representatives suggest that, upon graduation, they are well prepared for the demands of the professional field or further academic studies. The curriculum and extracurricular activities, e.g. an Excellence track and various entrepreneurial programmes, provide them with ample opportunities to develop themselves personally and professionally.

The IM Horizons project has provided an important impetus for the design of a third-year programme that is relevant and aligned with industry trends and developments. A range of relevant courses has been designed to offer students a chance to further develop themselves in areas particularly relevant for the 21st century work field.

3.2 Curricula

3.2.1 Learning objectives and behavioural indicators

The programme learning outcomes have been described in a clear and transparent way. They have been made more concrete and translated into course modules with the help of the EBA model, which specifies the level of autonomy expected from the student as well as the level of complexity of the task to be completed.

The set of learning outcomes consists of two specific international learning outcomes. These could be made more visible to create a more distinct profile for the programme as the Dutch-spoken *Bedrijfsmanagement* programme works with these same learning outcomes.

3.2.2 Internship/practical training/workplace learning

The IBM programme ensures a connection to the professional field through various curricular activities (Inspiration Days, IM Talks) An internship is incorporated into the final semester of the programme. Specific performance indicators and assessment criteria have been defined to assess students' personal and professional development during the internship. Exposing to realities of the workplace.

The programme has established long-lasting connections with internship companies in Belgium and overseas, which safeguards the quality of internship places. Students are assessed based on clear and specific performance indicators.

3.2.3 Bachelor's thesis/final project

The requirements for the final project are clearly outlined. The research line is logically built into the curriculum, preparing students for the culmination of their studies: the final research project.

Students conducted their final research project individually and for the internship company if they opt for an internship abroad. If they pursue an internship in Belgium, the research is commissioned by another company and conducted in groups. Due to student requests individualised tracks are increasingly possible.

Though processes are in place to evaluate individual contribution to group research projects, we would recommend strengthening assurance of learning for each individual student to ensure that the standards required of students completing their final research as part of a group (in Belgium) are equivalent to those required of students who complete their final research individually (abroad).

Another point of attention is ensuring that the number of credits awarded for the final project and the actual study load align if the programme decides to move towards more individual final projects.

3.2.4 Internationalisation

The curriculum contains several consciously designed internationalisation activities in the first and second year, among others a COIL project with students from a Canadian partner institution and thematic study trips. Several extracurricular activities are organised, such as a Global Citizenship programme and students have the option to follow a study abroad semester in the third year.

It is advised to further integrate currently extracurricular internationalisation activities more formally into the curriculum. Additionally, it is recommended to utilise internationalisation at home opportunities more to mix student groups and enhance intercultural learning opportunities. At present, student selection of language studies has inadvertently resulted in streaming of Belgian and foreign students into separate schedules. The result is a missed opportunity to maximise the internationalisation of student composition in the classes.

It would also be worthwhile to further clarify definitions of who is considered an international student within the context of this programme and the compulsory nature of spending time abroad. This would allow for better measuring the degree of internationalisation. As such, this will also be reflected in the construction of better KPIs.

The programme has conducted valuable curriculum benchmarks with similar programmes abroad and established two Double Degree programmes with partners in Austria and Canada, which contribute to additional international opportunities for students.

3.2.5 Engaging internal and external stakeholders

Strategic partners for internships are in place and the programme engages companies for career events and other professional orientation activities.

Opinions of a range of stakeholders have been sought in the curriculum design process.

Student participation is high and ensured through the Student Council and other representative bodies as well as more informal monthly meetings.

3.3 **Motivating learning environment**

Through the new elective course in the third year and wide range study abroad options students have a chance to shape their own curriculum and specialise to some extent after the first two years being more generic in nature.

Besides the formal curriculum many extracurricular activities are offered, allowing students to further work on their personal and professional development. Through these activities they also build their social network and integration is facilitated.

We understand that the extracurricular opportunities are mostly taken up by foreign students and that Belgian students have lower participation rates. We would recommend strategies to be developed to increase involvement of domestic students to enhance opportunities for intercultural connections among students.

Extensive coaching and the programme's strong emphasis on talent development further allow students to gain self-awareness and identify opportunities to maximise their learning experience.

The programme boasts high student satisfaction scores.

3.4 **Assessment**

The assessment methods are generally varied in nature and based on the programme's testing plan and established test matrices which align with the programme learning outcomes.

The programme puts a rather strong emphasis on groupwork. While this is merited given students' future profession, a better balance between individual and groupwork is advised. The assessment of group work and individual contributions made during the group process requires intensive monitoring to ensure individual learning. Although there are mechanisms in place for assessing individual contribution to group work (e.g., peer assessment), these may need to be strengthened to provide assurance of learning for all students.

The programme contains several path dependencies, which impact how the learning outcomes are reached (at home, internship, and abroad). These would also need to be carefully safeguarded to ensure that all students completing the programme have achieved comparable standards of equivalent outcomes.

The study load requires constant attention to ensure adequate spreading of deadlines and avoid too many peak moments.

3.5 **Study tracks, variants, excellence programmes, postgraduate programmes**

The programme offers various tracks and variants for students to shape their own programme in a flexible manner. Some of the programme's highlights are currently extracurricular in nature, which is somewhat of a missed opportunity. Therefore, it is advised to bring the formal and informal curriculum together more to strengthen each other and create greater synergy, also to allow stronger integration of domestic and international students.

According to the alumni survey, three-quarters of graduates continue their academic studies at a research university. Following the insights gained from the panel discussion with alumni, it is worth exploring whether the excellence programme could be designed in such a way that it allows for a smoother transition to Master's programmes by offering Research & Statistics courses.

4 RESEARCH AND SERVICES

An increasing number of IBM lecturers is involved in research. Efforts are made to involve more lecturers as it is believed that this will be beneficial for course content and a way to further professionalisation. However, research activities are not compulsory in nature and until now this process has developed organically. Lecturers' personal interests generally drive the research projects they work on.

Through the expertise network structure, a Head of Research supports the programme and wider network both in terms of the positioning of research in the curriculum and Bachelor theses as well as lecturers' research projects.

The research conducted by lecturers provides opportunities to have research insights feed back into the curriculum. This would ensure authentic and up-to-date content. While this has happened on some occasions, this is not consistently the case yet. One way of ensuring this would be to align research themes more with those of the curriculum/ IM Horizons to create greater synergy.

Few students are involved in the research being conducted, e.g. through internships with the research group or the excellence track. This could be utilised more to further strengthen students' research skills. The shift in the curriculum, driven by the IM Horizon project and with focus on integrated courses / problem-based courses, offers opportunities here.

Many lecturers are (self-)employed in the industry. As such, they have practical experience, a strong connection to what is happening in the field and link to work field and serve as linking pins to the industry.

5 TAILOR-MADE GUIDANCE

5.1 Incoming students

The programme aims to create a warm and close environment for its entire student body. It does so from day 1. Several activities are organised for students to ensure a soft landing. During an Introduction week, several onboarding activities take place. All students are immediately assigned a coach, whose support is highly valued.

An admissions office supports international students with any assistance needed prior to enrolment. All incoming students need to meet specific intake requirements, particularly in terms of their English language proficiency (CEFR B2). They also participate in intake interviews and take a FIT test to assess how well adapted they are to their new academic and disciplinary environments.

5.2 Student progress

The extensive coaching system (study, diversity and language coaching) ensures that student progress is closely monitored throughout the programme. The Office of Student Support provides valuable second-line services, such as psychosocial and socio-legal guidance and study finance related support.

5.3 Student outflow

The outflow of students is high (90%). This is in part explained by the student profile in terms of their prior education (largely ASO), programme requirements, the teaching format and intensity of the coaching programme.

6 STAFF MEMBERS

6.1 HR policy

An HR policy is in place at the level of the Business and Management expertise network, which is aligned with the Artevelde UAS HRD Department policies regarding recruitment and the internal professionalisation track for (new) staff members.

In its reflection document, the study programme demonstrates a strong awareness of the value of a sustainable HR policy which matches employee talents to organisation needs, and the specific identity of the programme.

During the recruitment process, candidates are to provide a trial lesson and need to demonstrate strong ties to the professional field as well as English language proficiency (CEFR C1). Professionalisation of current staff members is facilitated financially through the university-wide professionalisation budget.

6.2 Expertise and competence

The programme boasts a team of passionate, motivated, and devoted professionals. A broad range of expertise is present in the team. Several lecturers work in the industry next to their teaching position. As a result, they bring a lot of practical experience into the programme, which also contributes to the programme staying relevant and a valuable professional network.

In terms of competence level, the team is well-qualified to offer the IBM programme.

From the staff expertise overview, it appears that some of the key knowledge areas, particularly those emphasised in the new third year curriculum, are not staffed equally strongly. It is advised to be aware of possible qualitative friction in the team as temporary guest lecturers are usually not conducive for the continuity of the programme.

Though staff leadership and commitment are certainly present, the university and programme will need to ensure that both adequate development time is allocated to curriculum leaders for IM Horizons development into years 1 and 2 of the programme, and that sufficient depth of staff uptake is assured to avoid too great a burden on too few staff leaders.

The onboarding of new staff members includes a buddy system and an inhouse onboarding pathway, which includes support in the areas of didactics and teaching in an international classroom.

New lecturers are given time to develop their didactic skills and various aspects involved in higher education are explained at set intervals. To further allow new staff members to adjust to their new professional environment, it is advised to take this into account in their task allocation to allow time for further professionalisation, e.g. through job shadowing.

6.3 Professional development policy

Through the Desiderata system, lecturers have a say in their job content. In a dialogue with programme management decisions are made on task allocation and areas of professionalisation, both from a personal as organisational perspective.

6.4 **Staff mobility**

The programme considers staff mobility an important means of professionalisation. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic several team members participated in staff mobility opportunities, e.g by coaching, second year study trips, partner visits or attending conferences. It is advised to extend these mobility options to all staff members for the benefit of staff development.

7 **QUALITY CULTURE**

7.1 **Quality assurance approach**

The programme has formalised its procedures in specific handbooks and guidelines for lecturers and students. It follows the PDCA cycle in its evaluations of curricular components, which is done formally via regular course evaluations and input from representative bodies, such as the Department Council and Student Council. More informally this is achieved via monthly meeting with programme management.

Quality cycles have been established at a programme and unit level.

The quality assurance process is supported by a Quality Coordinator from the Business and Management expertise network.

7.2 **Quality securing**

Quality is ensured through a large variety of feedback mechanisms, e.g. regular programme and unit evaluations and lecturers' own evaluations. Management and lecturers show a high responsiveness to (in)formal feedback.

It is advised to establish a number of KPIs regarding quality criteria, which would facilitate the measuring of progress made in this area.

7.3 **Improvement cycle**

The programme makes improvements based on key insights gained from its evaluations, however, it could make these more visible. In order to close the feedback loop, it is advised to clearly communicate which improvements were made as a result of the evaluations conducted, e.g. in course syllabi.

7.4 **Vision and approach on innovation**

The new third year elective courses, as part of the programme's IM Horizon vision, are the clearest demonstration of the programme's awareness and vision on offering a more futureproof curriculum. In its approach, the programme initially involved a core team of staff members developing the new curriculum, which has created the new courses in co-creation. It is clear the group of people involved has been broadened as time progressed. A point of attention will remain to take the entire staff members along in the process and involving less vocal members as well in order to ensure inclusion and buy-in from all involved.

8 INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructure within Artevelde UAS' Kantienberg campus is inviting to all students providing a stimulating learning environment. Besides classrooms, there are many areas, e.g. labs, where students can socialise or work on their study or other entrepreneurial projects.

The Stropkaai campus provides a unique environment, functioning as a "living room" for international and internationally oriented students boasting facilities such as an SDG corner.

Considering the programme's blended learning approach, the IT infrastructure remains a point of attention to ensure it allows the needed flexibility.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 Strengths

The committee is of the opinion the Professional Bachelor programme International Business and Management scores sufficiently or good on each of the criteria.

It has identified several key strengths:

- A highly motivated and ambitious team of lecturers, driven to make an impact
- A strong awareness of future proofing the curriculum and the need to stay relevant
- A committed and highly passionate student body
- A management team serves as a strong role model and glue.
- High student participation/ representation
- High student satisfaction
- A “rebel” status within the organization as the first international programme within Artevelde UAS, which can be further utilised and maintained
- A wealth of (international) opportunities for students
- An extensive support system for students

9.2 Observations and growth opportunities

The committee has reached some observations, which could provide opportunities for further growth:

- Establishing greater measurability (KPIs), defining milestones
- Ensuring all students benefit from curriculum changes (less extracurricular)
- Focus on continuity of the program (staffing of key topics)
- Coherent vision on internationalisation
- Utilizing opportunities of international classroom more (over practical)
- Ensuring unique voice of IBM as an international program remains heard within the ENW.
- Considering more opportunities for individual student work
- Utilizing formal and informal curriculum (leverage to maximize impact)
- Employ the opportunities offered by research to continuously feed back into the curriculum

10 **A NOTE OF APPRECIATION**

The review committee wishes to express its appreciation to Artevelde UAS for the hospitality extended and all participants for their frank contributions to the panel discussions. A special word of thanks is owed to Vicky Derweduwen, who provided the committee with meticulous notes of all discussions.

11 ANNEX

Brief description of the CVs of the committee members

Peter de Boer works as project leader of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences' European University Initiative (RUN-EU). For nearly 12 years he served as senior lecturer and programme coordinator in NHL Stenden's International Business (BBA) programme. In that capacity he worked among others on strengthening the programme's internationalisation strategy, which resulted in the programme being awarded the Certificate of Quality in Internationalisation (CeQulnt) by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) in 2018. He holds a Master's in Language and Cultural Studies from the University of Groningen (NL).

Klaas Vansteenuyse had a track record as post-doctoral researcher before entering the university of applied sciences in Leuven (KHLeuven). He served as head of the international office for 10 years. In 2018, and during the merger of several institutions, he became head of the Educational Services and Student Affairs at UC Leuven-Limburg. He coordinates and coaches various teams in this position, and also serves as chairman of the Student Services of UCLL.

Todd Thexton is Assistant Professor and Program Head of the Bachelor of Business Administration Program at Royal Roads University (Victoria, Canada). He has served in a variety of academic leadership roles at the University, including as Director of the School of Business for five years. He has led several strategically important change initiatives within the University, including the design and implementation of a new project-based learning curriculum in the School of Business and an undergraduate challenge-based learning curriculum in the liberal arts and humanities. He has been a contributing faculty member to the University's designation as an Ashoka Changemaker University. He launched the Royal Roads University School of Business's UN PRME initiative.

Jeanette de Haan works as a Key Account Manager at Awin. For nearly 3 years she has helped the company to grow its online business. As a network they connect advertisers with publishers to be widely visible online. Contrary to other online marketing channels, Awin is working performance based, which means: no cure, no pay. In the Amsterdam office, Awin has a strong focus on the Dutch and the Belgium market, but they are also represented in other countries. During this time, she has successfully guided various Artevelde students during their internship at Awin. Before joining Awin, Jeanette worked as a consultant at NCOI, a private education institute that focuses on working professionals.

Dobrinka Barzachka is a Customer Success Manager at AIP NV. She is responsible for the commercial projects at one of the products at AIP- BIPP (Biotech Innovation Procurement Platform), a SaaS solution designed to serve the purchasing needs of profit and non-profit organisations at Biotech, Life Sciences and Academia. She supports the growth of BIPP with setting up and execute commercial and business development strategies, customer success and ambassadorship program. Dobrinka has a master's degree in literature and Linguistics at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, Bulgaria. She speaks 5 languages and has 20 years of international commercial experience. As a Manager Expats she volunteers at Community Gent and takes care of the coordination of the expat's activities within the organisation. As of 2021 Dobrinka Barzachka supports the international recruitment team at Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, Gent.

Jules De Bruyckere is currently a student at AUAS. He is in his final year of the Professional Bachelor: Communications Management, where he mainly focusses on strategy, rebranding and creative campaigning. Before that, he studied at the University of Ghent for three years

in the Academic Bachelor: Business Engineering. In his spare time he tries to get a taste of worklife as much as possible by doing seasonal work and internships at different organizations in the world of communication. Besides his studies and seasonal work, Jules is also active in a youth movement. In that capacity he's been a member of the youth council in his municipality for a couple of years. He strongly believes that the youth are the future, but finds that too often they are overlooked when it comes to policy setting and decision making. As a member of that youth, he tries to bring about meaningful change everywhere he can.

Veerle De Frène serves as Head of the Artevelde UAS Professional Bachelor programme in Midwifery.