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Evaluation EMBA in Hospitality Administration Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (HES-SO)

Final report | 06.03.2013



Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	The EMBA-HA	1
3	The evaluation procedure	1
3.1	Self-evaluation report	1
3.2	On-site visit	2
3.3	External evaluation report	2
4	Fulfilment of the quality standards	2
4.1	Global evaluation	2
4.2	Strengths and areas of improvement	3
4.3	Position statement of the study programme.....	4
5	Final evaluation of the OAQ	4
6	Annexes	4

1 Introduction

The present report relates to the evaluation of the “EMBA in Hospitality Administration” (EMBA-HA) offered within the HES-SO¹ by the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL). This report is based on the self-evaluation report and on the external experts report, including the outcomes of the on-site visit.

The OAQ evaluation procedure is conform to the ENQA² standards and guidelines. The evaluation is based on the accreditation standards of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs for study programmes in the frame of Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). The procedure involves three stages: i. self-evaluation carried out by the programme, ii. external appraisal by an independent group of experts iii. decision (by the OAQ Scientific advisory board).

The evaluation of the EMBA-HA was mandated by the HES-SO governance on a voluntary basis.

2 The EMBA-HA

EHL has provided postgraduate level courses since 2002, when the first Master’s programme was launched, the Master in Hospitality Management (MHA), whereas undergraduate Bachelor studies are a longstanding tradition at EHL, emphasising since over 100 years the institution’s philosophy of blending the arts and sciences of hospitality through theory and practice.

Once HES-SO granted its funding to develop the EMBA-HA, the senior management at EHL mandated the conversion of the MHA programme into the EMBA-HA. Launched in June 2010, the EMBA-HA is a one-year full-time continuing education Master programme of 64 ECTS addressed to young graduates wishing to pursue and develop an executive-level career in hospitality management. This EMBA aims to provide graduates with the knowledge and skills required by leading hospitality organisations worldwide. Attendance to the 8 modules is obligatory (no e-learning foreseen).

The focus is on hospitality and extends to the services sector in general while preparing students to be leaders in the hospitality-related business. It is aimed at both ‘career changers’ who wish to move into hospitality and at ‘career climbers’ already in the field, who wish to fast-track their careers.

The programme currently enrolls 22 students (12 females, 10 males). In the academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively 28 and 26 students graduated from the EMBA-HA. For the time being at least 25 new students are expected to start their EMBA studies in the fall of 2013 (cohort 2013-2014). Current students represent 12 nationalities, have an average work experience of 6.5 years and are mostly career changers. The average student age is 30 years.

The faculty involved consists of 24 professors (11 PhDs, 6 Masters, 3 Bachelors, 4 renowned chefs – practical arts).

3 The evaluation procedure

3.1 Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation phase began in May 2012. The self-evaluation report was sent to OAQ on 15 October 2012. OAQ then forwarded the report to the selected panel of experts, who

¹ Haute Ecole Spécialisée de Suisse Occidentale

² European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

highlighted the good quality of the self-evaluation report that provided well structured basic information.

The unit under evaluation chose to add in its report a session dedicated to internationalisation. Indeed, the theme of internationalisation was perceived as significant for the study programme under review. A dedicated chapter could better highlight the analysis, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, essential for an analytical self-evaluation.

The report could easily be used by the experts as a helpful instrument to evaluate the programme. The experts have then collected complementary data during the on-site visit, which proved essential for the formulation of their final judgement.

3.2 On-site visit

The panel of experts was composed of three members:

- Ms. Noëlle O'Connor (peer leader), Course Director Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies with Event Management, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality, Limerick Institute of Technology, School of Business and Humanities (Ireland);
- Ms. Angela Jane Roper, Professor and Director of the International Centre for Hotel and Resort Management, University of West London (UK);
- Ms. Ulrike Kuhnenn, Professor in Tourism Management, HTW Chur Fachhochschule Ostschweiz (Switzerland);

The on-site visit took place on 18 - 19 December 2012. During the visit the panel of experts met different representatives of the programme: HES-SO direction, EMBA-HA governing bodies, programme director, faculty, students, technical staff, professional partners.

The visit was perfectly organized by the EHL. The atmosphere was pleasant and the experts particularly appreciated the punctuality, the frankness and the collaboration with the interviewees and the representatives of the programme.

The group felt that the range of individuals with whom it was able to meet, the nature of the discussions and the variety of supplementary material produced in response to requests during the course of the visit enabled it to make a full and well-informed appraisal of the programme under evaluation.

3.3 External evaluation report

Following the on-site visit, the experts wrote an evaluation report. Every predetermined evaluation area was analyzed (Implementation and training objectives; Internal structure and quality management; Studies; Teaching staff; Student body; Material and spatial resources). Suggestions for quality improvement, as well as recommendations, were put forward.

Standards 3.05 and 3.06 were considered inapplicable to the present study programme and therefore were not taken into consideration in the external evaluation.

4 Fulfilment of the quality standards

4.1 Global evaluation

The experts report concludes that the EMBA-HA globally fulfils the quality standards examined. The programme under evaluation meets 15 of the 19 applicable standards and partially meets the remaining 4 (standards 1.02, 2.01, 2.03, 4.03). None of the standards was found as being missed. Indications regarding the fulfilment of each standard are provided in detail in the

summarizing table (Annexe 2), including a comprehensive summary of all suggestions and recommendations for the improvement and development of the study programme.

4.2 Strengths and areas of improvement

In the view of the panel of experts the programme's main strengths are:

- The programme objectives of the EMBA-HA are in line with the mission statements and strategic objectives of both the HES-SO and EHL, with strong support from all key stakeholders, i.e. faculty, management, support staff, the hospitality industry and HES-SO;
- The programme benefits widely from the international dimension embedded in the well-established culture of EHL, which means that EMBA-HA students are exposed to international companies, international conferences/events and are presented with worldwide career opportunities;
- A highly committed team of persons, who share a common vision of the role and content of the programme, including the student body;
- There is effective communication with key stakeholders involved in the programme as well as EHL's alumni;
- At a school level, internal communication appears to operate effectively among all groups involved;
- The EMBA-HA is very well supported with excellent EHL infrastructure and related academic resources.

In parallel, the panel of experts identified the following areas of potential challenge, development or improvement:

- Sustaining the content, delivery and currency of the programme in an internationally competitive market and rapidly changing economic and industrial environment is one of the main challenges. On-going monitoring is particularly critical, as there is a gradual but increasing trend in EMBA-HA student recruitment towards the "career changers" (80% in the current cohort);
- Postgraduate courses have been cautiously developing within EHL and a postgraduate culture is now needed to be developed at a strategic level within the School. EMBA-HA is run successfully as a small postgraduate programme but it should have the potential to attract a much larger cohort;
- There is the opportunity to work closer with current EHL partners, to integrate the other Executive Masters which the School is currently involved in and to develop further the academic and scholarly orientation of EHL;
- Activities and tools for the development, coordination, implementation and quality assurance of the programme are present, but need more formalised procedures and consultations.
- The EMBA-HA faculty commission's roles and responsibilities should be fully defined and documented. The regular inclusion of student representatives in the EMBA-HA faculty commission is underway for 2013 and this shared responsibility will be monitored for its productive contribution to the programme.

- The gender ratio for the institution is not quite as representative for the EMBA-HA teaching staff. This indicates that there is some discrepancy at the highest level of teaching (EMBA-level) and should be monitored and addressed in faculty programme recruitment.

4.3 Position statement of the study programme

In its position statement, dated 8 February 2013, the unit under evaluation expressed its full agreement with the experts report, the analysis provided, the recommendations for improvement and the conclusions drawn. In response to the 4 major recommendations given by the panel of experts, EHL indicates the measures already in place for the improvement:

1. Academic reading and referencing: ongoing reviews foresee that relevant academic and business research will be incorporated into course and modules descriptions and monitored closely in order to improve the consistency and quality of documentation.
2. Programme management: ongoing reviews foresee new roles, a more active participation in the programme Faculty commission from all stakeholders, and a formal documenting procedure.
3. Internal quality assurance system: a new Director of quality and accreditation has been appointed at a strategic institutional level. The quality processes at EMBA-level will be embedded in the new institutional system.
4. Gender ratio: decisions on recruitment are decided at EHL strategic level; the EMBA-HA team will promote this issue in regard to selection of academic staff who will contribute to the programme.

5 Final evaluation of the OAQ

On the basis of what has been reported in the previous chapters the OAQ considers that the EMBA-HA in its current development stage meets high qualitative standards. Therefore the OAQ endorses the positive judgement reached by the experts.

The OAQ invites the programme management to continue exploring ways of improvement, taking into account the recommendations and suggestions given in the experts report as indicated in the attached table (Annexe 2).

The OAQ concludes that the study programme “EMBA in Hospitality Administration” is authorized to use the quality label “OAQ evaluated”.

6 Annexes

- Annexe 1: Experts Report
- Annexe 2: Comprehensive table on the fulfilment of the quality standards, including suggestions and recommendations for improvement

OAQ
Falkenplatz 9
Postfach 7456
3001 Bern

www.oaq.ch



Evaluation procedure in the field of UAS – Study Programme « EMBA in Hospitality Administration» (EHL, HES-SO) – Fulfilment of the standards

Quality Standards		Standards fulfilment ¹	Suggestions and recommendations for improvement	Reference to experts report
1	Area 1: Implementation and training objectives			
1.01	The degree programme pursues training objectives that match the UAS mission statement and strategic planning objectives.	fulfilled	The panel suggests programme leadership of the EMBA-HA to further develop the course in an even more global context in the future.	p. 6
1.02	The degree programme is generally based on the criteria established for international recognition of foreign qualifications, especially recognition within Europe.	Partially fulfilled	The panel recommends that a clear graduate profile is made available to prospective students. It should also be ensured that all modules are presented at master's level and are underpinned by current research and academic enquiry as many of the programme team are currently undertaking very valuable research which could be integrated more into the delivery of the EMBA-HA modules.	p. 7
1.03	The degree programme enables students to assimilate course content within the time allotted.	fulfilled	The panel suggests considering some alteration of module weightings as the programme matures as a result of staff, student and alumni learning/reflection of changes in the economic and competitive environment of the industry.	p. 9
1.04	Gender equality is guaranteed.	fulfilled	(Ref. standard 4.03)	p. 10
2	Area 2: Internal structure and quality management			

¹ Fulfilled / Partially fulfilled / Not fulfilled / Standard not applicable

Quality Standards		Standards fulfilment ¹	Suggestions and recommendations for improvement	Reference to experts report
2.01	Decision-making processes, competencies and responsibilities are clear and properly implemented.	Partially fulfilled	The EMBA-HA Faculty commission requires a more formalised approach; its members and decision-making competences have to be defined for the coming years.	p. 11
2.02	Both teachers and students are involved in the decision-making process whenever decisions affect them.	fulfilled	The programme and its student's representatives might explore ways to further involve students in the formal decision-making processes of the School.	p. 12
2.03	The practical relevance and quality of the degree programme are regularly evaluated. The results are used to further develop course content.	Partially fulfilled	To maintain their leading position and in order to enable international accreditation in the future, the panel recommends a more formal approach is taken in relation to the academic quality assurance of the programme. External academics should be involved when the course is being evaluated to ensure international quality assurance standards are maintained. The team should also consider the future executive and managerial needs of the industry in course content design and delivery.	p. 13
3	Area 3: Studies			
3.01	The degree programme is based on a structured study plan that is coherent with coordinated implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Swiss UAS.	fulfilled		p. 13
3.02	The study plan is based on training objectives and generally leads to issuance of a professional qualification that matches a clear content profile.	fulfilled	The panel suggests to encourage the use of stronger academic underpinning and referencing, for example, within the Career Capstone Project.	p. 14

Quality Standards		Standards fulfilment ¹	Suggestions and recommendations for improvement	Reference to experts report
3.03	The degree programme is based on a modular structure that awards credits on the basis of performance and examinations held at established intervals.	fulfilled	The panel suggests that marks are not allocated to student attendance and participation. More detailed Module Handbooks would assist the students. Assessment tasks and marking criteria could be presented in a more standardised and professional way across the programme.	p. 14
3.04	The conditions to be met in order to obtain credits and qualifications are regulated and disclosed to the public.	fulfilled	The panel suggests to continue to make module descriptors and hand-outs available online to students through WebCT and to develop a more comprehensive Programme Handbook. The Rules and Regulations should be continually monitored and reviewed to reflect best practice at international level.	p. 15
3.05	A clear distinction is drawn between the competencies to be obtained in a Bachelor's degree programme and those to be obtained in a Master's degree programme (competency profile ²).	Not applicable		
3.06	The UAS guarantees that the competencies obtained during the Bachelor's degree programme are coherent with the competencies required for admission to the corresponding Master's degree programme.	Not applicable		
4				
4.01	Lessons are taught by teachers who have	fulfilled	The panel suggests to continue developing current faculty and supporting academic staff in their career development; both pedagogic	p. 17

² See agreement between the Confederation and the Cantons regarding the implementation of UAS Master's degree programme, Bern 24 August 2007.

Quality Standards		Standards fulfilment ¹	Suggestions and recommendations for improvement	Reference to experts report
	adequate expertise in their field, have teaching credentials, hold a higher education qualification and have several years of professional experience.		and academic/scholarly updating might be encouraged, financially supported and rewarded.	
4.02	Most teachers are involved in several aspects of the expanded performance mandate.	fulfilled		p. 17
4.03	There is a balanced gender ratio among the teaching staff.	Partially fulfilled	The gender ratio for the institution is not quite as representative for the EMBA-HA teaching staff. This indicates that there is some discrepancy at the highest level of teaching (EMBA-level) and should be monitored and addressed in faculty programme recruitment.	p. 18
5				
5.01	The competencies required for admission and graduation are defined, publically disclosed and checked.	fulfilled	The panel suggests to consider monitoring the applicability and impact of entry-profile labels.	p. 19
5.02	Gender equality as well as implementation of a general non-discrimination policy are ensured.	fulfilled		p. 20
5.03	The degree programme enables student mobility. Other higher education institutions recognise studies undertaken at the UAS.	fulfilled	The panel suggests that existing academic partnerships could be used more to facilitate student mobility exchanges and programme integration. This will support international and academic development.	p. 20
5.04	Students have access to student advisory	fulfilled		p. 21

Quality Standards		Standards fulfilment ¹	Suggestions and recommendations for improvement	Reference to experts report
	services.			
6				
	The degree programme has the resources needed to reach the objectives. Resources are available over the long-term.	fulfilled		p. 21
Global evaluation³		Positive		

³ Positive / Negative