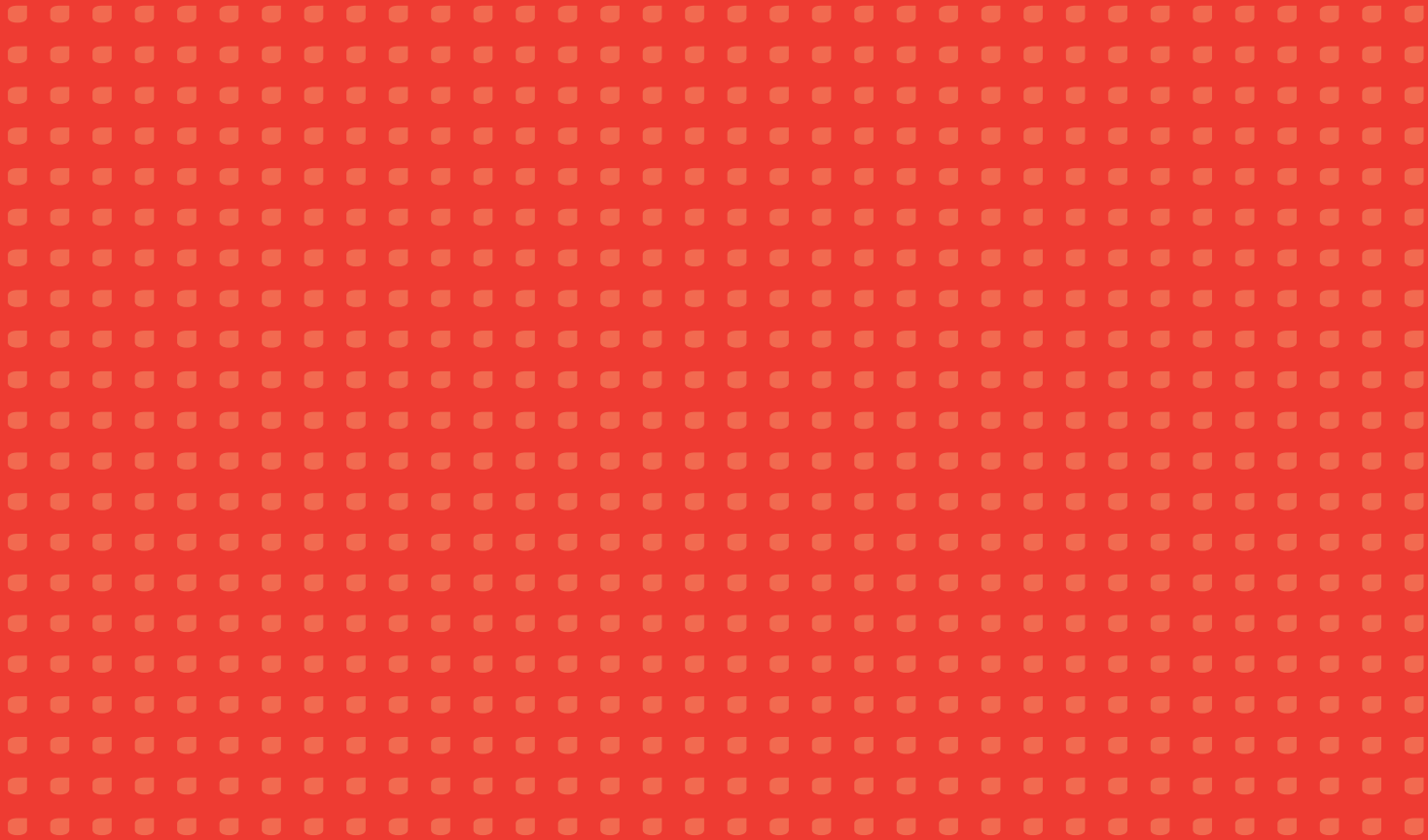# aaq

schweizerische agentur
für akkreditierung
und qualitätssicherung

agence suisse
d'accréditation et
d'assurance qualité

agenzia svizzera di
accreditamento e
garanzia della qualità

swiss agency of
accreditation and
quality assurance

Institutional accreditation
SBS Swiss Business School GmbH

External assessment report | 26 November 2021

Content:

Section A
Decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council

24 September 2021

Akkreditierungsentscheid

des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats

Institutionelle Akkreditierung der SBS Swiss Business School GmbH

I. Rechtliches

Bundesgesetz vom 30. September 2011 über die Förderung der Hochschulen und die Koordination im schweizerischen Hochschulbereich (Hochschulförderungs- und -koordinationsgesetz, HFKG), SR 414.20

Verordnung des Hochschulrates vom 28. Mai 2015 (Stand 1. Januar 2018) über die Akkreditierung im Hochschulbereich (Akkreditierungsverordnung HFKG), SR 414.205.3

Reglement vom 12. März 2015 über die Organisation des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats (OReg-SAR)

II. Sachverhalt

Die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH (SBS) hat mit Schreiben vom 1. Oktober 2019 ein Akkreditierungsgesuch als Fachhochschulinstitut beim Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrat (SAR) eingereicht.

Die SBS hat die Schweizerische Agentur für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung AAQ als Akkreditierungsagentur gewählt.

Der Akkreditierungsrat hat am 6. Dezember 2019 Eintreten auf das Gesuch der SBS entschieden und die Unterlagen an die AAQ weitergeleitet.

Die AAQ hat das Verfahren am 29. Januar 2020 eröffnet.

Die von der AAQ eingesetzte Gutachtergruppe hat auf der Grundlage des Selbstbeurteilungsberichts vom 10. Februar 2021 und der Vor-Ort-Visite[1] vom 6.-7. Mai 2021 an der SBS Swiss Business School GmbH geprüft, ob die Qualitätsstandards nach HFKG erfüllt sind, und einen entsprechenden Bericht verfasst (vorläufiger Bericht der Gutachtergruppe vom 19. Juli 2021).

Die AAQ hat gestützt auf die verfahrensrelevanten Unterlagen, insbesondere den Selbstbeurteilungsbericht und den vorläufigen Bericht der Gutachtergruppe, den Entwurf des Akkreditierungsantrags formuliert und der SBS am 19. Juli 2021 zur Stellungnahme vorgelegt.

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[1] Aufgrund der Corona-Pandemie fanden sowohl die Vorvisite wie auch die Vor-Ort-Visite virtuell statt (Zoom-Meeting).

Die SBS hat am 11. August 2021 zum Bericht der Gutachtergruppe und zum Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ Stellung genommen.

Aufgrund der Stellungnahme der SBS hat die Gutachtergruppe ihren Bericht mit Datum vom 6. August 2021 angepasst und die AAQ hat den Akkreditierungsantrag mit Datum vom 6. August 2021 fertiggestellt.

Die AAQ hat mit Schreiben vom 6. August 2021 beim Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrat Antrag auf Akkreditierung der SBS Swiss Business School als Fachhochschulinstitut eingereicht.

Mit Schreiben vom 29. Oktober 2021 hat die AAQ dem Akkreditierungsrat bestätigt, dass die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH Deutsch als Verfahrenssprache gewählt hat.

III. Erwägungen

1. *Bewertung der Gutachtergruppe*

Im Ihren Bericht betont die Gutachtergruppe, dass die SBS dank ihrer überschaubaren Grösse auf die Studierenden zentriert ist und mit ihren Studienprogrammen einen klaren Praxisbezug aufweist. Die Internationalität von Fakultät und Studierenden schaffe zudem eine akademische Lernumgebung, welche von den Studierenden sehr geschätzt werde.

Die Gutachtergruppe anerkennt die positiven Entwicklungen im Qualitätssicherungssystem der SBS, hebt in ihrem Bericht jedoch auch einige Herausforderungen hervor, vor welche das Fachhochschulinstitut gestellt ist. Namentlich hebt sie die Vereinfachung des Qualitätssicherungssystems, die Formalisierung des Reportings zu strategischen Zielen, die Etablierung einer Forschungsstrategie und die Anpassung der Zulassungsbedingungen zum ersten Studienzyklus hervor. Die Gutachter formulieren zur Behebung dieser Mängel daher folgende Auflagen:

Standard 1.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

Standard 1.1: Die Hochschule oder die andere Institution des Hochschulbereichs legt ihre Qualitätssicherungsstrategie fest. Diese Strategie enthält die Leitlinien eines internen Qualitätssicherungssystems welche darauf abzielt, die Qualität der Tätigkeiten der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs und deren langfristige Qualitätsentwicklung zu sichern sowie die Entwicklung einer Qualitätskultur zu fördern.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In their analysis of standard 1.1, the group of experts conclude that although the SBS has developed a quality assurance system, the combination of 60 handbooks, the SBS Management Cockpit with over sixty key performance indicators (KPIs) (…) too complex for a higher education institution of the size of SBS. The group

of experts misses an actual quality assurance strategy.» Against this background, the group of experts formulates two conditions:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: In ihrer Analyse von Standard 1.1 kommt die Gutachtergruppe zum Schluss, dass, obwohl die SBS über ein Qualitätssicherungssystem verfügt, die Kombination aus 60 Handbüchern, dem SBS Management Cockpit mit über sechzig *Key Performance Indicators* (KPIs) (...) für eine Hochschule der Grösse der SBS zu komplex sei. Der Gutachtergruppe fehlt eine eigentliche Qualitätssicherungsstrategie. Vor diesem Hintergrund formuliert die Gutachtergruppe zwei Auflagen zu Standard 1.1:

Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.1): SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement.

Auflage 1 (zu Standard 1.1): Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems und seiner Komponenten durchführen, sodass die Ergebnisse aus den Qualitätsmanagement-Prozessen die von der Qualitätssicherungsstrategie geforderten Ergebnisse liefern können. Die daraus resultierende Qualitätssicherungsstrategie muss veröffentlicht werden.

Condition 2 (regarding standard 1.1): SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system.

Auflage 2 (zu Standard 1.1): Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems durchführen, um eine Rationalisierung der derzeitigen Verbreitung von Handbüchern, KPIs und Prozessen sicherzustellen. Weiterhin ist sicherzustellen, dass mit Blick auf die Integration in das Gesamtsystem die Rollenverteilung klar ersichtlich ist.

Standard 1.2: The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfills its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

Standard 1.2: Das Qualitätssicherungssystem ist in die Strategie der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs integriert und unterstützt auf wirksame Weise deren Entwicklung. Es umfasst Prozesse, mit denen überprüft wird, ob die Hochschule oder die andere Institution des Hochschulbereichs ihren Auftrag erfüllt. Dies erfolgt unter Berücksichtigung ihres Typs und ihrer spezifischen Merkmale.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In their analysis of standard 1.2, the group of experts conclude that SBS has established a "dashboard". However, the dashboard and its indicators are "still relatively new and not yet completely embedded; their utility has not yet been robustly tested." (Expert Report, p. 8) The group of experts are of the opinion, that "more formal use of the quality assurance system to support the School by providing evidence that can

be clearly used to demonstrate achievement or otherwise of strategic goals, and the development of an accompanying risk management plan should provide the senior management with clear evidence based on the KPIs and the institutional dashboard and cockpit." p. 8).» Against this background, the group of experts formulates two conditions:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: In ihrer Analyse von Standard 1.2 kommt die Gutachtergruppe zu dem Schluss, dass die SBS ein „Dashboard" eingerichtet hat. Allerdings sind das Dashboard und seine Indikatoren „noch relativ neu und noch nicht vollständig eingebettet; ihr Nutzen wurde noch nicht *robust* getestet." (Gutachterbericht, S. 8) Die Gutachtergruppe ist der Meinung, dass „ein formeller Einsatz des Qualitätssicherungssystems zur Unterstützung der Hochschule durch die Bereitstellung von Nachweisen, die zur Feststellung eines erreichten Leistungsziels oder anderweitig von strategischer Bedeutung sind" Ziele und die Entwicklung eines begleitenden Risikomanagementplans sollten der Geschäftsleitung anhand der KPIs und des institutionellen Dashboards und Cockpits klare Beweise liefern." Vor diesem Hintergrund formuliert die Gutachtergruppe zwei Auflagen zu Standard 1.2:

Condition 3 (regarding standard 1.2): SBS should embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1).

Auflage 3 (zu Standard 1.2): Die SBS muss ihr System von KPIs, institutionellem Dashboard und Cockpit einbetten um sicherzustellen, dass sie eine formellere Überwachung der strategischen Ziele der Hochschule unterstützen. Die KPIs und das Cockpit sollten der Grösse und Struktur des Instituts angemessen sein (siehe auch Standard 1.1).

Condition 4 (regarding standard 1.2): SBS should develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk.

Auflage 4 (zu Standard 1.2): Die SBS muss ein Risikoregister mit Mechanismen zur Berichterstattung und Risikoverminderung erstellen.

Standard 2.1: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.

Standard 2.1: Das Qualitätssicherungssystem erlaubt sicherzustellen, dass die Organisationsstruktur und die Entscheidungsprozesse es der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs ermöglichen, dass diese ihren Auftrag erfüllen und ihre strategischen Ziele erreichen kann.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In their analysis of standard 2.1, the group of experts conclude that the organisational structure does not support the institution in achieving its mission and goals. In particular, the group of experts states that "the dual roles that are played by the owners of the School create some systematic dilemmas and risks, especially for those in management roles. (…) This also impacts on academic freedom and its application to all staff, students and committee members. A clear distinction between the ownership and the

strategic and academic leadership of the School is needed." (Expert Report, p. 13/14).» Against this background, the group of experts formulates a condition:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: In ihrer Analyse von Standard 2.1 kommt die Gutachtergruppe zum Schluss, dass die Organisationsstruktur die Institution nicht bei ihrer Aufgabe und der Erreichung ihrer Ziele unterstützt. Insbesondere stellt die Gutachtergruppe fest, dass „die Doppelrolle, die von den Eigentümern der Hochschule gespielt wird, einige systematische Dilemmata und Risiken schafft, insbesondere für die Führungspositionen. (...) Dies hat auch Auswirkungen auf die akademische Freiheit und deren Anwendung auf alle Mitarbeiter, Studierenden und Ausschussmitglieder. Es ist eine klare Trennung zwischen dem Eigentum und der strategischen und wissenschaftlichen Führung der Hochschule erforderlich. (Gutachterbericht S. 13/ 14) Die Gutachtergruppe formuliert vor diesem Hintergrund eine Auflage:

Condition 5 (regarding standard 2.1): SBS should carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom.

Auflage 5 (zu Standard 2.1): Die SBS muss eine Überprüfung ihrer Governance-Struktur durchführen, um sicherzustellen, dass die Regeln für die Leitung einer wissensbasierten Institution im Hinblick auf ihre institutionelle Unabhängigkeit sowie die Unabhängigkeit ihrer Mitarbeiter, Studierenden und Ausschussmitglieder gemäss dem Grundsatz der akademischen Freiheit eingehalten werden.

Standard 3.1: The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Standard 3.1: Die Aktivitäten der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs entsprechen ihrem Typ, ihren spezifischen Merkmalen und ihren strategischen Zielen. Sie beziehen sich hauptsächlich auf die Lehre, die Forschung und die Dienstleistungen und werden gemäss dem Prinzip der Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit unter Einhaltung des Mandats der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs ausgeübt.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In its analysis of standard 3.1 the group of experts "that teaching and research are offered in accordance with SBS's mission, specific features and strategic objectives. However, in relation to research, the panel was concerned to find that time is not specifically allocated for this function and that faculty were not clear on the institutional research strategy or framework" (p. 23)». Against this background, the group of experts formulates a condition:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: In ihrer Analyse des Standards 3.1 hält die Gutachtergruppe fest, dass Lehre und Forschung in Übereinstimmung mit den Aufgaben,

Besonderheiten und strategischen Zielen der SBS angeboten werden. In Bezug auf die Forschung stellt die Gutachtergruppe jedoch mit Sorge fest, dass für diese Aufgabe keine spezifischen zeitlichen Ressourcen vorgesehen sind und dass sich die Fakultäten über die institutionelle Forschungsstrategie und den institutionellen Rahmen nicht klar waren" (S. 23)». Vor diesem Hintergrund formuliert die Gutachtergruppe eine Auflage:

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.1): SBS should formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy.

Auflage 6 (zu Standard 3.1): Die SBS muss eine Forschungsstrategie formalisieren, die sicherstellt, dass die Fakultät ihre Forschung gemäss den in der Strategie definierten Themen durchführt.

Standard 3.2: The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

Standard 3.2: Das Qualitätssicherungssystem sieht eine regelmässige Evaluation der Lehr- und Forschungstätigkeit, der Dienstleistungen sowie der Ergebnisse vor.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In their analysis of standard 3.2 the group of experts conclude that a periodic evaluation process for research is not yet established. Against this background the group of experts formulates a condition:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: In ihrer Analyse des Standards 3.2 kommt die Gutachtergruppe zum Schluss, dass für die Forschung noch kein periodischer Evaluationsprozess etabliert wurde. Vor diesem Hintergrund formulieren die Gutachter eine Auflage:

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.2): SBS's quality assurance system shall provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see standard 3.1).

Auflage 7 (zu Standard 3.2): Das Qualitätssicherungssystem der SBS muss für die regelmässige Evaluierung der Forschung einschliesslich der Forschungsstrategie sorgen (siehe Standard 3.1).

Standard 3.4: The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

Standard 3.4: Das Qualitätssicherungssystem erlaubt sicherzustellen, dass die Kriterien für die Zulassung und Beurteilung der Leistungen der Studierenden und für die Abgabe von Ausbildungsabschlüssen entsprechend dem Auftrag der Hochschule oder der anderen Institution des Hochschulbereichs berücksichtigt werden. Diese Kriterien werden definiert, kommuniziert und systematisch, transparent und konstant angewandt.

Considerations of the expert group according to AAQ report: «In their analysis of standard 3.4 the group of experts conclude that SBS is not fully applying the rules of admission as defined in article 25 HEdA. The group of experts further point out that the regulations of the canton of Zurich concerning work permits keep international students from being able to fulfil the requirement of 1 year of work experience. SBS claims that on achieving accreditation, it will be possible to fulfill article 25 HEdA. Against this background the group of experts formulates a condition:

Erwägungen der Gutachtergruppe gemäss Bericht der AAQ: «Die Gutachtergruppe kommt in ihrer Analyse des Standards 3.4 zu dem Schluss, dass die SBS die Zulassungsregeln gemäss Art. 25 HFKG nicht vollumfänglich anwendet. Die Gutachtergruppe weist weiter darauf hin, dass die Vorschriften des Kantons Zürich betreffend Arbeitsbewilligungen für internationale Studierende diese daran hindern, die Voraussetzung von einem Jahr Berufserfahrung zu erfüllen. Die SBS beteuert, dass dies durch die Erlangung der Akkreditierung nach Art. 25 HFKG erfüllt werden könne. Die Gutachter formulieren vor diesem Hintergrund eine Auflage:

Condition 8 (regarding standard 3.4): SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law.

Auflage 8 (zu Standard 3.4): Die SBS muss nachweisen, dass ihre Zulassungsbestimmungen den geltenden Gesetzen entsprechen.

Insgesamt schliesst die Gutachtergruppe aus den vorliegenden Analysen und Evaluationen, dass die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH über ein Qualitätssicherungssystem verfügt, welches alle Bereiche und Prozesse der Hochschule erfasst. Die Gutachtergruppe sieht folglich die zentralen Voraussetzungen für eine institutionelle Akkreditierung gemäss Artikel 30 HFKG erfüllt.

Die Gutachtergruppe schlägt eine Akkreditierung unter den genannten acht Auflagen vor.

2. *Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ*

Die AAQ hält in ihrem Akkreditierungsantrag fest, dass die Analyse der Gutachtergruppe sich auf alle Standards bezieht und die Schlussfolgerungen nachvollziehbar sind.

In ihrem Akkreditierungsantrag an den Akkreditierungsrat übernimmt die AAQ die Empfehlung der Gutachtergruppe und beantragt unter Berücksichtigung der obigen Erwägungen und gestützt auf:
  – den Selbstbeurteilungsbericht der SBS
  – den Bericht der Gutachtergruppe
  – die Stellungnahme der SBS

die Akkreditierung der SBS als Fachhochschulinstitut mit acht Auflagen:

- Auflage 1 (zu Standard 1.1):
  Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems und seiner Komponenten durchführen, sodass die Ergebnisse aus den Qualitätsmanagementprozessen

die von der Qualitätssicherungsstrategie geforderten Ergebnisse liefern können. Die daraus resultierende Qualitätssicherungsstrategie muss veröffentlicht werden.

- Auflage 2 (zu Standard 1.1):
  Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems durchführen, um eine Rationalisierung der derzeitigen Verbreitung von Handbüchern, KPIs und Prozessen sicherzustellen. Weiterhin ist sicherzustellen, dass mit Blick auf die Integration in das Gesamtsystem die Rollenverteilung klar ersichtlich ist.

- Auflage 3 (zu Standard 1.2)
  Die SBS muss ihr System von KPIs, institutionellem Dashboard und Cockpit einbetten um sicherzustellen, dass sie eine formellere Überwachung der strategischen Ziele der Hochschule unterstützen. Die KPIs und das Cockpit sollten der Grösse und Struktur des Instituts angemessen sein (siehe auch Standard 1.1).

- Auflage 4 (zu Standard 1.2)
  Die SBS muss ein Risikoregister mit Mechanismen zur Berichterstattung und Risikoverminderung erstellen.

- Auflage 5 (zu Standard 2.1)
  Die SBS muss eine Überprüfung ihrer Governance-Struktur durchführen, um sicherzustellen, dass die Regeln für die Leitung einer wissensbasierten Institution im Hinblick auf ihre institutionelle Unabhängigkeit sowie die Unabhängigkeit ihrer Mitarbeiter, Studierenden und Ausschussmitglieder gemäss dem Grundsatz der akademischen Freiheit eingehalten werden.

- Auflage 6 (zu Standard 3.1)
  Die SBS muss eine Forschungsstrategie formalisieren, die sicherstellt, dass die Fakultät ihre Forschung gemäss den in der Strategie definierten Themen durchführt.

- Auflage 7 (zu Standard 3.2)
  Das Qualitätssicherungssystem der SBS muss für die regelmässige Evaluierung der Forschung einschliesslich der Forschungsstrategie sorgen (siehe 3.1).

- Auflage 8 (zu Standard 3.4)
  Die SBS muss nachweisen, dass ihre Zulassungsbestimmungen den geltenden Gesetzen entsprechen.

Die AAQ hält eine Frist von 24 Monaten zur Erfüllung der Auflagen für angemessen.

Die AAQ schlägt vor, die Überprüfung der Auflagenerfüllung im Rahmen einer Vor-Ort-Visite (0,5 Tag) durch drei Gutachtende der ursprünglichen Gutachtergruppe vornehmen zu lassen.

3. *Stellungnahme der SBS Swiss Business School GmbH*

   Die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH bedankt sich bei der Gutachtergruppe und den Mitarbeitern der AAQ für ihren Beitrag zum Akkreditierungsprozess. Die SBS erachtet die acht von der Gutachter-

gruppe formulierten Auflagen als gute Gelegenheit für Verbesserungen des Qualitätssicherungssystems und eine Stärkung desselben. Sie akzeptiert daher die von der Gutachtergruppe vorgeschlagenen und von der Agentur übernommenen Auflagen und zeigt auf, wie sie diese umsetzen will.

4. Beurteilung des Schweizerischen Akkreditierungsrats

Der Bericht der Gutachtergruppe und der Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ sind vollständig und stichhaltig begründet. Sie ermöglichen es dem Akkreditierungsrat, einen Entscheid zu fällen.

Aus dem Akkreditierungsantrag der AAQ geht angemessen hervor, dass die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH die Voraussetzungen für die institutionelle Akkreditierung gemäss Artikel 30 HFKG, die durch die Qualitätsstandards (Art. 22 und Anhang 1 der Akkreditierungsverordnung) konkretisiert werden, erfüllt. Namentlich verfügt die SBS über ein Qualitätssicherungssystem, welches alle Bereiche des Fachhochschulinstitutes erfasst und erlaubt, die Ziele der SBS als Fachhochschulinstitut zu erreichen.

Die Auflagen, die die Gutachtergruppe beantragt und die von der Agentur übernommen wurden, erachtet der Akkreditierungsrat als schlüssig. Er übernimmt diese Auflagen gemäss dem Akkreditierungsantrag, da sie eine klare Grundlage für Massnahmen der SBS zur Behebung der festgestellten Mängel formulieren. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat erachtet die von der AAQ vorgeschlagene Frist von 24 Monaten sowie die Modalitäten zur Überprüfung der Auflagen als angemessen.

IV. Entscheid

Gestützt auf die Rechtsgrundlage, den Sachverhalt und die Erwägungen entscheidet der Akkreditierungsrat:

1. Die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH (SBS) ist akkreditiert als Fachhochschulinstitut unter nachstehenden Auflagen:

   1.1 Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems und seiner Komponenten durchführen, sodass die Ergebnisse aus den Qualitätsmanagementprozessen die von der Qualitätssicherungsstrategie geforderten Ergebnisse liefern können. Die daraus resultierende Qualitätssicherungsstrategie muss veröffentlicht werden.

   1.2 Die SBS muss eine grundlegende Überprüfung ihres Qualitätssicherungssystems durchführen, um eine Rationalisierung der derzeitigen Verbreitung von Handbüchern, KPIs und Prozessen sicherzustellen. Weiterhin ist sicherzustellen, dass mit Blick auf die Integration in das Gesamtsystem die Rollenverteilung klar ersichtlich ist.

   1.3 Die SBS muss ihr System von KPIs, institutionellem Dashboard und Cockpit einbetten um sicherzustellen, dass sie eine formellere Überwachung der strategischen Ziele der Hochschule unterstützen. Die KPIs und das Cockpit sollten der Grösse und Struktur des Instituts angemessen sein.

   1.4 Die SBS muss ein Risikoregister mit Mechanismen zur Berichterstattung und Risikoverminderung erstellen.

1.5 Die SBS muss eine Überprüfung ihrer Governance-Struktur durchführen, um sicherzustellen, dass die Regeln für die Leitung einer wissensbasierten Institution im Hinblick auf ihre institutionelle Unabhängigkeit sowie die Unabhängigkeit ihrer Mitarbeiter, Studierenden und Ausschussmitglieder gemäss dem Grundsatz der akademischen Freiheit eingehalten werden.

1.6 Die SBS muss eine Forschungsstrategie formalisieren die sicherstellt, dass die Fakultät ihre Forschung gemäss den in der Strategie definierten Themen durchführt.

1.7 Das Qualitätssicherungssystem der SBS muss für die regelmässige Evaluierung der Forschung einschliesslich der Forschungsstrategie sorgen.

1.8 Die SBS muss nachweisen, dass ihre Zulassungsbestimmungen den geltenden Gesetzen entsprechen.

2. Die SBS muss dem Akkreditierungsrat innerhalb von 24 Monaten ab Entscheid des Akkreditierungsrats, d.h. bis zum 23. September 2023, Bericht über die Erfüllung der Auflagen erstatten.

3. Die Überprüfung der Auflagenerfüllung erfolgt während einer Vor-Ort-Visite (1/2 Tag) durch 3 Gutachtende.

4. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat erteilt die Akkreditierung für eine Dauer von sieben Jahren ab dem Datum des Entscheids, d. h. bis zum 23. September 2028.

5. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat veröffentlicht die Akkreditierung in elektronischer Form auf www.akkreditierungsrat.ch.

6. Der Schweizerische Akkreditierungsrat stellt der SBS eine Urkunde aus.

7. Die SBS Swiss Business School GmbH erhält das Recht, das Siegel «Institutionell akkreditiert gemäss HFKG 2021-2028» zu verwenden.

8. Diese Verfügung geht in Kopie an die Agentur zur Publikation mit dem Bericht zum Verfahren.

Bern, 24. September 2021

Präsident des Schweizerischen
Akkreditierungsrats

Prof. Dr. Jean-Marc Rapp

Rechtsmittelbelehrung
Gegen diese Verfügung kann innert 30 Tagen nach der Eröffnung beim Bundesverwaltungsgericht, Postfach, 9023 St. Gallen Beschwerde geführt werden.

Section B
Procedure according to HEdA and agency accreditation proposal

9 July 2021

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1 Legal basis

According to the Higher Education Act (HEdA) of 30 September 2011, institutional accreditation is a condition for the right to use the reserved designations (Art. 29 HEdA), for granting of federal contributions (Art. 45 HEdA) and for programme accreditation. It applies to all public or private higher education (HE) institutions and other institutions within the higher education sector.

The HEdA Accreditation Ordinance of 28 May 2015 (statuts as of 1 January 2015) specify Art. 30 HEdA on the requirements for institutional accreditation; it provides the rules of the procedure and the quality standards.

2 Objective and purpose

With the HEdA, Switzerland is endowed with an instrument designed to control access to its range of HE institutions. Institutional accreditation focuses on the quality assurance systems of HE institutions that allow them to ensure the quality of their teaching, their research and the services that they provide.

The quality assurance system is assessed against quality standards by external experts who offer an objective perspective on quality assurance and development approaches and mechanisms. The aim is to assess whether those approaches and mechanisms form a complete and coherent whole allowing the HE institution to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of its activities, depending on its type and specific characteristics, and abiding by the principle of proportionality between resources deployed and results achieved. A look at the whole system every seven years allows the HE institution to regularly review the development and the coherence of the various elements in place.

3 Procedure

3.1 Admission

The HEdA Accreditation Ordinance specifies under article 4, paragraphs 1 and 2 the admission requirements for the accreditation procedure and foresee a decision on admission decision by the Swiss Accreditation Council.

The SBS Swiss Business School GmbH (SBS) does not fulfil the requirements set under article 4, paragraph 2 of the HEdA Accreditation Ordinance and was admitted into the accreditation procedure after having demonstrated that it fulfils the requirements set under paragraph 1 of the same article.

3.2 Calendar

Due to the Corona pandemic, both the pre-visit and the on-site visit had to be conducted virtually (Zoom meeting).

6.12.2019	Decision on entry by the SAC
29.1.2020	Opening of the procedure

30.6.2020	Planification meeting
10.2.2021	Delivery of the self-assessment report
15.3.2021	Preliminary visit
6.-7.5.2021	On-site-visit
19.7.2021	Expert report and Accreditation proposal AAQ
11.8.2021	Position statement of SBS
6.8.2021	Final Expert report and Accreditation proposal AAQ
24.9.2021	Accreditation Decision
30.11.2021	Publication of the report

3.3 Expert group

Prof. Dr. Rico Baldegger	Director Higher education institution for economy, HES-SO
Micha Neumair	Master student Business Administration, ZHAW
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Fröhlich	President CBS International Business School, Köln Mainz Potsdam
Prof. Thia Hennesy	Dean Cork University Business School
Prof. Dr. Ruedi Nützi	Director Higher education institution for economy, FHNW

Prof. Dr. Ruedi Nützi was the peer leader of the expert group.

3.4 Self-assessment report

SBS involved all the internal stakeholder groups by forming a Steering Committee for the Accreditation. Part of the committee was faculty, students, administrative staff and executive management. The Steering Committee defined a Road map and guidelines. The committee met in May, June, October and December 2020. Additionally, an Accreditation Task was formed and met every week. Members were the Head of Quality Education, the Academic Dean and a quality assurance external consultant. They worked according to the Road Map and reported its progress. For the writing the Head of Quality Education was in charge. The final draft version of the Self-assessment report was sent to faculty and staff for the final feedback and after integrating the comments to the Supervisory Board for approval.

The self-evaluation report contains a portrait of the SBS, a description of the self-evaluation process, an insight into the quality development system, and an analysis of compliance with the quality standards for institutional accreditation. The report concludes with an action plan for the further development of the quality assurance system.

3.5 Preliminary visit and visit

On 15 March 2020, the full expert peer group met via Zoom with the Steering Committee Institutional Accreditation of SBS. Representatives of QAA were also present at this visit.

AAQ commenced the visit by providing an overview of the Swiss higher education system, including the roles of AAQ and the Swiss Accreditation Council; it also briefed the expert group on their role and remit within the accreditation process.

The preliminary visit provided an opportunity for SBS representatives to articulate to the expert peer group the institution's context and quality assurance system and, based on their reading of the self-assessment report and accompanying documentation, the expert peers sought additional information and clarification of a number of key themes:

- The USP of the applied university or institute is the practical orientation of its provision. How does this impact concretely on the learning experience of SBS students? How do the educational programmes/consultancy work/research reinforce this practical focus? How does it become a reality across SBS and its quality system?
- What is the impact of the quality system on SBS graduates?
- The staff profile (predominance of part-time staff): what are the policies and processes for recruitment, deployment and development of staff? The impact of the staff profile on vision, mission, research etc.? HR management from a strategic and daily management perspective.
- The financial situation: how is financial stability ensured? What kind of risk management processes are in place for finance? What kind of risk assessment has been undertaken in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on, for example, recruitment?
- The place of research at the institution: staff development, its impact on programmes of study, internal journal v. internationally peer reviewed articles, research-orientation v. market orientation
- Sustainability: how are students actively involved in this debate and what is the link between sustainability and the vision/mission?
- Diversity: of the staff and student bodies. How does the institution manage the diversity of the student body in terms of its internationality? Practical examples of student participation in the quality system and their impact on its development and operation.

Further documentation in respect of these themes was requested and subsequently provided to the peer group via AAQ:

- Page 17 SAR: example of a SWOT analysis - is not part of the Quality education handbook - maybe based on the review process MBA 2020 (Program major reviews, held every five-years and involving all stakeholders, generate solid, comprehensive reports with recommendations for improvement);
- Handbook cockpit or an overview of the 60 KPIs used;
- results of the comparison process - knowledge of students between the start and end of the program (p. 19 SAR);
- PLO (Program learning outcomes);
- Statistics on admission (vocational baccalaureate, baccalaureate, sur dossier etc.);
- Fail rate (courses, exam);
- Recruitment process (lecturer and staff);
- Process for changing curriculum;
- Timeline what actions mentioned in the self-assessment report already started like an overview of all actions planned;
- Examples of the curriculum on sustainability;
- Samples of research output;
- Development of members of faculty and staff (from part time to full time lecturer etc.);
- Surveys of competitiveness of students in the Labour market, impact feedback from companies;

- Survey of the success rate of the graduates;
- PDCA cycle, show 2-3 examples of a process that went to the PDCA cycle;
- Work Diversity project (period 2021-2023, SAR page 44).

The main review visit took place via Zoom over two days from 6 to 7 May 2021. During nine sessions, the full expert peer group spoke with a cross-section of SBS faculty and staff, management and students. Representatives of AAQ also attended the visit.

The main review visit concluded with a debrief session for all the participants in the sessions on the part of SBS led by the peer group leader and attended by the peer group and AAQ representatives.

3.6 Expert report

The report of the expert group could be submitted to the SBS for comment on 12 July 2021, together with AAQ's accreditation application.

3.7 Position statement of SBS Swiss Business School GmbH

The SBS submitted its statement to AAQ in due time on 5 August 2021. In its statement, SBS thanks the experts for their valuable work and the project leaders for the good supervision and implementation of the procedure. The SBS is willing to meet the requirements within the deadline and points out that it has already identified some points itself and included them in its action plan.

4 Accreditation proposal

The institutional accreditation procedure is designed as a peer review. Each report of a group of experts therefore stands for a snapshot of a higher education institution at a specific moment in time; accordingly, the reports of the group of experts are not designed for drawing comparisons between higher education institutions. The accreditation proposals, on the other hand, must be consistent: identical findings must lead to identical proposals.

In its proposal, the agency examines the question of whether the group of experts argumentation is coherent, i.e. related to the standard and evidence-based, and ensures consistency with previous proposals.

4.1 Context

"SBS Swiss Business School GmbH (SBS) was founded in 1998 to provide tertiary level A business administration and further education programs to Swiss and international students. It is registered as a limited corporation (GmbH) in Switzerland." (Expert Report, p. 1)

SBS offers awards the following degrees:

- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) with the specialisations in "International Management", "Entrepreneurship" or "Marketing"

- Master of Science in International Business (MSc)

- Master in Business Administration (MBA)

In addition, SBS offers a "Top-Up BBA with a specialization in International Management" and an "Executive MBA (EMBA)".

In 2020, SBS had a total of 69 staff, 4 of which were full-time, 37 adjunct members of staff and 6 visiting staff. At the same period 279 students were enrolled in programs of SBS.

4.2 Considerations

Accreditation recommendation of the expert group

In its final overall assessment (Expert Report, p. 39/40), the group of experts emphasis that SBS, thanks to its size, provides "a very student-centered and responsive experience for their students"; that the study programmes have a clear relation to practice; that the internationality of faculty and student body enables a social and academic environment appreciated by the students; and that the staff and faculty are committed and enjoy long-term relationships with SBS. Also rated positively by the group of experts was the way SBS responded to the Covid-19 pandemic: "all academic activities were moved online within a week; faculty were offered training in online tools and no hours or activities were cut from the students' curricula and programs."

In its final overall assessment, the group of experts also notes several challenges that SBS must overcome. In particular, the group of experts highlights that SBS needs to simplify its quality assurance system; that it needs to formalise the reporting on strategic objectives; that the SBS needs to establish a process for dealing with economic risks; that the current governance structure of SBS is not suitable to ensure academic independence in the long term; that SBS needs to establish a research strategy; and that admission procedures need to be adapted to meet legal requirements after the accreditation.

Overall, the group of experts concludes with its analyses and evaluations that SBS has a quality assurance system that covers all areas and processes of the university. Consequently, the group of experts considers the central prerequisite for institutional accreditation according to Article 30 HFKG to be fulfilled.

Based on their analysis the group of experts sees the need for correction in the following areas:

– Quality assurance strategy (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a item 7; standards 1.1 and 1.2)

– Governance (Art. 30 para. 1. let. a item 3; standard 2.1)

– Sustainability (Art. 30 para. 1. let. a item 6, standard 2.4)

– Research (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a item 1; standards 3.1 and 3.2)

– Admission to the first cycle (Art. 30 para. 1 let. a item 2; Standard 3.4).

The group of experts therefore recommend eight conditions.

In their analysis of standard 1.1, the group of experts conclude that although the SBS has developed a quality assurance system, the combination of 60 handbooks, the SBS Management Cockpit with over sixty key performance indicators (KPIs), the PDSA model and the rapid responses and improvements made in the light of suggestions is too complex for a higher education institution of the size of SBS. The group of experts misses an actual quality assurance strategy.

Against this background, the group of experts formulate 2 conditions:

Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.1):

SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional

oversight of quality assurance and improvement.

Condition 2 (regarding standard 1.1):

SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system.

In their analysis of standard 1.2, the group of experts conclude that SBS has established a "dashboard". However, the dashboard and its indicators are "still relatively new and not yet completely embedded; their utility has not yet been robustly tested." (Expert Report, p. 8) The group of experts are of the opinion, that "more formal use of the quality assurance system to support the School by providing evidence that can be clearly used to demonstrate achievement or otherwise of strategic goals, and the development of an accompanying risk management plan should provide the senior management with clear evidence based on the KPIs and the institutional dashboard and cockpit." (p. 8).

Against this background, the group of experts formulate 2 conditions:

Condition 3 (regarding standard 1.2):

SBS should embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1).

Condition 4 (regarding standard 1.2):

SBS should develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk.

In their analysis of standard 2.1, the group of experts conclude that the organisational structure does not support the institution in achieving its mission and goals. In particular, the group of experts states that "the dual roles that are played by the owners of the School create some systematic dilemmas and risks, especially for those in management roles. The current situation, where the owner of the School is also the Academic Dean and where close relations also hold senior posts, does not constitute good governance and leads to a situation where the independence of certain groups is not assured, since all key decisions are made by Boards of which the Academic Dean and close relations are members. This also impacts on academic freedom and its application to all staff, students and committee members. A clear distinction between the ownership and the strategic and academic leadership of the School is needed." (Expert Report, p. 13/14).

Against this background, the group of experts formulate a condition:

Condition 5 (regarding standard 2.1):

SBS should carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom.

In their analysis of standard 2.4, the group of experts express their concerns about the economic sustainability of SBS. The group of experts understand their conclusion – "The review panel was not in agreement with SBS's view on its economic sustainability, nor that the risk register and succession planning mitigated against any risk." (p. 19) – as an additional argument which sustains conditions 3 and 4 regarding standard 1.2.

In its analysis of standard 3.1 the group of experts "that teaching and research are offered in accordance with SBS's mission, specific features and strategic objectives. However, in relation to research, the panel was concerned to find that time is not specifically allocated for this function and that faculty were not clear on the institutional research strategy or framework" (p. 24)

Against this background, the group of experts formulate a condition:

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.1)

SBS should formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy.

With respect to services that group of experts notes in its report: "The review panel understood that it is not obligatory for SBS to be active in the field of services as a consulting service. However, SBS is reasonably active in the field of further education, offering EMBA and MBA studies. If SBS grows its research activity, might be possible for them to be active in the field of contract research, which is also a service." (p. 24)

In their analysis of standard 3.2 the group of experts conclude that a periodic evaluation process for research is not yet established. Against this background the group of experts formulate a condition:

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.2):

SBS's quality assurance system shall provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see 3.1).

In their analysis of standard 3.4 the group of experts conclude that SBS is not fully applying the rules of admission as defined in article 25 HEdA. The group of experts further point out that the regulations of the canton of Zurich concerning work permits keep international students from being able to fulfil the requirement of 1 year of work experience. SBS claims that on achieving accreditation, it will be possible to fulfil article 25 HEdA. Against this background the group of experts formulate a condition:

Condition 8 (regarding standard 3.4):

SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law.

Appreciation of the considerations of the group of experts

AAQ notes that the expert group has reviewed all standards. The assessment of the group of experts and the conclusions drawn are conclusive and coherently derived from the standards. AAQ further notes that the proposed conditions are appropriate to ensure the identified need for further development of the quality assurance system.

While AAQ assesses the analysis, conclusion and recommendation for accreditation as a sound basis for its proposal for accreditation, the agency makes following amendments:

- Regarding standard 3.1:
  The statement of the expert group that there is no obligation for SBS to be active in services is not correct; Article 30 HEdA defines as one of the requirements for accreditation: "teaching, research and services are of high quality (…)". Services clearly must be part of an accredited HEI's activities. The term services covers a broad range of activities such as continuing education, consulting or other activities of knowledge transfer. Since SBS has shown that they are active in continuing education, AAQ sees no need for an additional condition, but stresses the importance of services as part of an accredited HEI's activities.

- Regarding standard 4.1:
  One element of standard 4.1 is the operation on a going concern basis. The group of experts have expressed their concerns regarding this aspect under standard 2.4. AAQ points out that these concerns could either be repeated under standard 4.1 or be moved to standard 4.1. However, AAQ sees no need for an additional condition.

- Regarding standard 5.1:
  The group of experts clearly state that SBS has not published its quality assurance strategy. The analysis of standard 1.1 shows that SBS does not have a quality assurance strategy as such; which explains why it could not have been published in the first place. While AAQ sees no need for an additional condition, the agency expands condition 1 so that it covers the publication of the quality assurance strategy.

Finally, AAQ aligns the formulation of the conditions based on the model of condition 8: "SBS must …. ."

4.3 Proposal

AAQ states that Swiss Business School meets the requirements of Article 30 HEdA for institutional accreditation as "Fachhochschulinstitut" (UAS institute):

– *Article 30 para 1 let. a and c*

The analysis of the standards according to the Accreditation Ordinance by the group of experts shows that Swiss Business School fulfils the requirements according to letter a items 1-7 as well as letter c or will have fulfilled them after the fulfilment of the conditions.

– *Article 30 para 1 let. b*

The requirements under Article 30 paragraph 1 letter b are not applicable to a Fachhochschulinstitut (UAS institute).

Based on the self-assessment report of SBS, the analysis in the expert report, the accreditation recommendation of the group of experts and the position statement of the SBS, AAQ proposes to grant the accreditation of Swiss Business School as Fachhochschulinstitut with 8 conditions:

Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.1 and 5.1):

SBS must carry out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement. The resulting quality assurance strategy must be published.

Condition 2 (regarding standard 1.1):

SBS must carry out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the

rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system.

Condition 3 (regarding standard 1.2):

SBS must embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1).

Condition 4 (regarding standard 1.2):

SBS must develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk.

Condition 5 (regarding standard 2.1):

SBS must carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom.

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.1)

SBS must formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy.

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.2):

SBS's quality assurance system must provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see 3.1).

Condition 8 (regarding standard 3.4):

SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law.

The AAQ considers a period of 24 months for the fulfilment of the conditions to be reasonable.

The AAQ proposes to carry out the review of the conditions as part of a shortened on-site visit (0.5 day/1 day) with 3 experts.
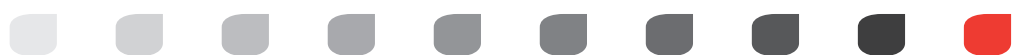
Section C
Expert report

6 July 2021

Table of Content

1 SBS Swiss Business School GmbH

Introduction, vision and mission

SBS Swiss Business School GmbH (SBS) was founded in 1998 to provide tertiary level A business administration and further education programs to Swiss and international students. It is registered as a limited corporation (GmbH) in Switzerland.

The activities of SBS focus on teaching, research and services and are conducted according to the principles of freedom and independence. The School's mission states:

"SBS Swiss Business School is dedicated to fostering academic excellence and student achievement on the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate level in business management. Its mission, therefore, is to provide students with a strong academic foundation using an andragogical learning philosophy to develop problem-solving skills and, with access to various specialized knowledge bases, to prepare them to become productive, competent professionals and responsible citizens in a diverse, dynamic global environment."

The SBS Vision anticipates that "By the end of 2024, SBS will be a recognized business school that advances and applies knowledge, provides excellence in life-long learning opportunities for students and for the sustainable and booming Zurich Airport region, Switzerland and the rest of the world."

The strategic goals for the next 3-4 years are in line with SBS's vision:

- to become a recognized business school according to the HEdA
- to cope with the immediate challenges and potential opportunities of the COVID-19 crisis

In 2018 SBS moved to the new "SBS Park Campus" in Zurich-Kloten with a brand-new building that was custom-designed for the School based on sustainability criteria.

Programmes

SBS offers the following programmes:

Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) with three specializations:

- International Management
- Entrepreneurship
- Marketing

Top-Up BBA with a specialization in International Management

Master of Science in International Business (MSc)

Executive MBA (EMBA)

Masters in Business Administration (MBA)

Staff and students

In 2020, SBS had a total of 69 staff, 4 of which were full-time, 37 adjunct members of staff and 6 visiting staff.

In total in 2020, there were 279 students as follows:

Bachelors: 76 (of which 68 were international)

Masters:	5 (of which 4 were international)
MBA:	81
EMBA:	20
Short courses:	97

Research

SBS is involved in applied research and publishes its own "Journal of Applied Business Research." The School participates in and organizes research conferences with other business schools and the with European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM).

2 Analysis of follow-up on the results of previous procedures

SBS has undertaken external accreditation processes since 2006. Some of these have been of a generic kind (EduQua, 2006; British Accreditation Council (BAC), 2018); the others have been discipline-specific (International Accreditation Council for Business Education, 2007, and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, 2013.

SBS believes that the two generic accreditations by EduQua and BAC have assisted it to develop and implement a quality assurance system in line with the Bologna Process. Given the dates of these two accreditations (2006 and 2018), it believes that it has been able to refine its processes and systems as the Bologna Process developed and the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) were implemented and became embedded.

The discipline-specific accreditations affirmed the academic standing of the programmes offered by SBS and prepared the institution for its first institutional accreditation by an EQAR listed European Accreditor in 2018 (BAC).

The review panel for the current AAQ accreditation process recognised the significant effort of SBS in preparing for and responding to the accreditation processes it has undertaken. However, it also noted in the responses in some of the meetings that it held during the site visit that there was a high level of pragmatism in undertaking such accreditations – they provided recognition of the School at a time when it does not have recognition in the country in which it is based. It also noted, through its reading of the self-assessment report (SAR) and additional documentation provided, that there was strong evidence of a quality assurance system but that is somewhat complicated and unwieldy for such a small institution. This suggests that, whilst recommendations made in previous accreditations have been taken on board, they have been added to the existing system without reflection on the impact of such accumulated additions on the quality assurance system as a whole. Both of these points are covered in more detail in section 4 below.

3 Quality assurance system of the SBS Swiss Business School

SBS Swiss Business School's quality assurance system and strategy has been developed over the last two decades and has benefited from the external accreditations described in section 2 above to supplement and revise its internal quality assurance procedures through these external experiences.

SBS has also used the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) to guide the development of quality assurance system and its Tertiary A-level programs are offered according to the Swiss National Education Framework (SBS Qualifikationsrahmen für den schweizerischen Hochschulbereich nqf.ch-HS) and the Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

SBS provided a Process Map to demonstrate how its quality assurance system is aligned with the vision and mission of the institution, how it encompasses all aspects of the institution, including support services and the centrality of the Plan-Do-Study-Adapt (PDSA) cycle in the system:
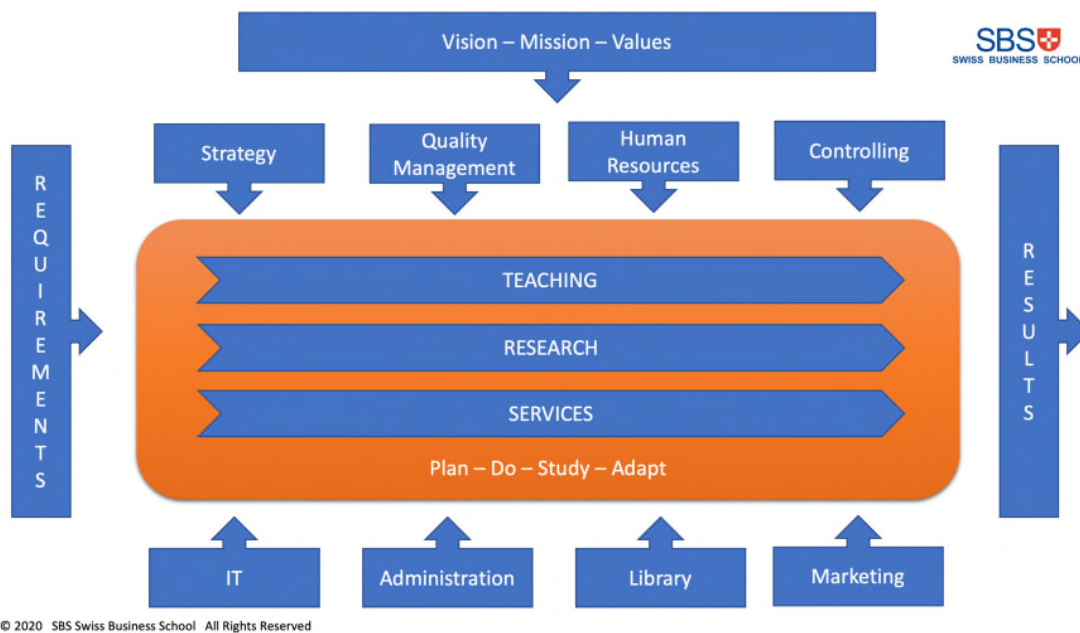
The Institutional and Academic Governance Structure involves key-stakeholders represented by the following Boards:

- Internal: Supervisory Board (SB), Quality Education Board (QEB), Faculty and Academic Board (FAB), Research Advisory Board (RAB) and Student Council (SC)

- External: Business Advisory Board (BAB), Alumni Board (AB)

The QEB is the forum through which oversight and quality assessment and enhancement of the academic programs is managed. Its role is to assure all interested parties including students and employers that SBS is fulfilling its mission.

SBS regards its quality assurance processes as a comprehensive management tool for the organization of its programs, practices, the students' journey, and services. It therefore carries out periodic evaluation of its services as well as its teaching and research activities. Qualitative and quantitative methods are used to collect and analyse data and the FAB is responsible for the quality assurance processes that relate to teaching and academic management. Programmes are monitored annually and periodically reviewed every five years.

The Research Advisory Board (RAB) sets the direction of applied research at SBS. It evaluates the researchers' yearly performance, assesses the research budget's monitoring, and appraises the achievement of the annual targets. Annual reports are submitted to the Supervisory Board and form the basis for revision of plans and adaption of the system. These reports include recommendations based on a critical analysis of evidence-based key performance indicators.

4 Analysis of the compliance with the quality standards

Area 1: Quality assurance strategy

> Standard 1.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall define its quality assurance strategy. This strategy shall contain the essential elements of an internal quality assurance system aimed at ensuring the quality of the activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and their long-term quality development as well as promoting the development of a quality culture.

Description and analysis

Description

The review panel read that, in its self-assessment report (SAR), SBS referred to its Quality Education Handbook as the primary document in terms of setting out the integration between, "…annual strategic planning and budgeting, institutional assessment and evaluation, and the analysis of data and indicators for informed decision-making and for continuous improvement of its educational programs and services". The School aims to comply with Swiss, European, and International quality standards through rigorous internal review a series of external reviews with accreditation bodies based in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. It also stated that it regards the quality assurance process as a, "…comprehensive management tool for the organization…" the objectives of which are:

- Structuring and optimizing SBS processes
- Operating work processes appropriately and with a result-oriented approach.
- Adapting SBS organizational structures to the processes.

The quality cycle involves reviews of varying depths, the frequency of which varies from annual reviews to more comprehensive five-yearly reviews which involve all relevant stakeholders and a SWOT analysis. The SAR states that the process is flexible enough to allow SBS to swiftly adapt its practices, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, any review process follows the PDSA cycle and these steps are carried out at various levels to capture the strategic, academic, and administrative perspectives.

In practice, **planning** is conducted annually, based on strategic development, academic execution and administrative needs. The Strategic Plan 2020-2024, Academic and Administrative Plans, and the Handbook Cockpit are key to this process.

Action (or '**doing**') follows the strategic projects that are defined each year, including the goals, the activities, the time of completion, and responsibilities. The Academic Plan generates the course outlines, the timetables and the yearly planning of surveys, exams, and reports. The Administrative Plan and budgets are monitored monthly, quarterly and annually. IT projects are defined, and parameters for staff and faculty hiring, induction, development and performance objectives are drawn up and implemented.

The third step of the PDSA cycle involves the assessment of **study** outcomes. Indicators are

provided at institutional, programme and course level. Data is collected and analysed to determine the extent to which the institution (or programme, or course) has met, exceeded, or fallen short of the target for each indicator. Results are then used to identify strengths, areas in need of improvement, and opportunities for change. Strategic projects are monitored against their initial goals. The SBS Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook and the Annual Academic Report are also monitored against their performance measures. A SWOT-analysis is executed for each programme every five years or triggered by special circumstances. The monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports are analysed against the planned budget.

Finally, following the review process, the Academic Dean, the Head of Faculty, the Head of Quality Education, and the Programme Managers inform the different boards and stakeholders about the results of reviews and of the data analysis and of the areas identified for improvement (adapt). Proposals for change or adaptation are reviewed and validated, the strategic and annual planning is adjusted, leading to budgeting decisions. Once the budget is approved, new or revised programs and the upgrade of services are implemented. For major strategic decisions, the Academic Dean initiates the plan with the different boards about how/which/when improvements will be made.

The SAR states that SBS interprets the concept of quality culture as a "structural and managerial combination with cultural and psychological components". Shareholders support the culture, which is reflected through a top-down and bottom-up approach to building mutual trust among all stakeholders.

Analysis

The SAR demonstrates SBS's belief that, over the last 20 years it has developed a system for and culture of quality which is expressed in the School's Mission and Vision, values, regulations, processes, and actions which are carried out through a systematic review cycle. It has received positive comments in this regard via the external accreditations that it has undertaken to date. However, despite this well-established culture, SBS recognises that keeping the momentum is a challenge and staff and faculty require on-going training and refresher courses in this regard. Changes to the system, either in relation to development and improvement or to adapt a complex quality assurance system can lead to delays or disruptions to process and the SBS SAR states that one of the lessons that it has learned is to be very thoughtful in adjusting or making changes in the SBS quality assurance system.

SBS believes that the PDSA cycle has been successfully applied at course, program and institutional level and that these produce, "solid, comprehensive reports with recommendations for improvement". Examples of improvements include the appointment of the QEB, the development of many policies and handbooks and the Sustainability Handbook. The School believes that it has successfully adapted recommendations from the various external accreditations to develop a system that is suitable for a small institution.

The review panel noted that SBS believes that its quality assurance strategy fully supports the accomplishment of SBS' mission and long-term quality development and contributes to supporting quality education and effectiveness and to promoting a quality culture. The panel would agree with SBS that quality assurance and enhancement is a continuous cycle and that it is, therefore, important to ensure the continued engagement of all staff, new and existing, through training and refresher courses.

However, through its reading documentation and discussions at meetings during the site visit, the review panel confirmed its view that the quality assurance system is still too complex for the size of the institution. It believes that this could be the result of the laudable efforts to take on board the recommendations made through a number of external accreditations. However, this has resulted in an 'ad hoc' system with frequent adaptations and additions and, therefore, it lacks the coherence of an integrated system. Indeed, at one meeting during the site visit, the

panel was told that, perhaps there was a need for a more integrated system. Whilst the panel is not in doubt about the culture of quality that aims to ensure that students are getting the best possible experience, nonetheless such an ad hoc approach has led to over-engineering, resulting in a complex system of which it is difficult to maintain oversight (see also standard 1.2 below).

The review panel acknowledges the existence of the PDSA cycle and was provided with examples of how this functions. However, it failed to see how the strategy provided for the closing of the PDSA loop. Many examples of improvements were given, as mentioned, but it was unclear to the panel how those improvements were then fed back into the cycle. In addition, the panel was informed that the results of reviews and the PDSA cycle were supplemented by some much more rapid responses and improvements as suggested by the Business Advisory Board (BAB). The panel agrees that the BAB plays an important role ensuring that SBS is up to date with industry requirements and that agility is important in terms of ensuring that innovation is not stifled. But it believes that institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement is further complicated by the rapid responses in this regard.

Conclusion

Whilst in line with the standard, SBS has a quality assurance strategy, in conclusion, the review panel believes that the combination of 60 Handbooks, the SBS Management Cockpit with over sixty key performance indicators (KPIs), the PDSA model and the rapid responses and improvements made in the light of suggestions by the BAB lead to:

a) a quality assurance system that has grown in an ad hoc manner and that may not meet the requirements of the institution it serves or be well-understood by its stakeholders;

b) a quality assurance system that is too complex for the size of the institution and that would benefit from rationalization and

c) Institutional oversight of the results reported by the quality assurance system could be facilitated by a root and branch consideration of the current system and its component parts.

The expert group assesses standard 1.1 as **partially** fulfilled.

Condition 1: SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement;

Condition 2: SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system.

> Standard 1.2: The quality assurance system shall be incorporated into the strategy of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector and efficiently support its development. It includes processes verifying whether the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector fulfils its mandate while taking account of its type and specific characteristics.

Description and analysis

Description

As stated in the SAR and published on website, the SBS Vision, anticipates that "*By the end of 2024, SBS will be a recognized business school that advances and applies knowledge, provides excellence in life-long learning opportunities for students and for the sustainable and booming Zurich Airport region, Switzerland and the rest of the world*." SBS believes that quality assurance is a critical contributor to achieving this Vision. The School is clear that recognition by peers and certification by various accreditation bodies are central to the School's ambitions. As already stated above, SBS has undertaken several external accreditations with this goal in mind.

In support of the Vision, SBS's Mission states that "*SBS Swiss Business School is dedicated to fostering academic excellence and student achievement on the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate level in business management. Its mission, therefore, is to provide students with a strong academic foundation using an andragogical learning philosophy to develop problem-solving skills and, with access to various specialized knowledge bases, to prepare them to become productive, competent professionals and responsible citizens in a diverse, dynamic global environment."* This mission is used by the SBS Supervisory Board (SB), the Quality Education Board (QEB) and the Faculty and Academic Board (FAB) to maintain and continuously improve each facet of the institution in line with its mission.

The Vision and Mission in turn, guide the SBS Strategy, the current version of covers 2020 to 2024.

The SAR states that the SBS Quality Assurance system, "interacts and guides the different constituencies to set mechanisms and procedures that support them in the systematic review of their practices and performance through varying measures, including surveys, questionnaires, exams, and reports. These activities contribute to the monitoring and overall evaluation of SBS strategy, Mission, and Vision through various performance management systems".

The performance management systems are operationalised through the SBS Management Cockpit which links over sixty KPIs with Handbooks, owners of handbooks, report frequency and due date, sustainability goals, and version controls. The review panel was able to see a snapshot of the Cockpit in the Quality Management Handbook. The implementation of each component of the mission regularly monitored against performance indicators, and then reported to the corresponding Board.

Analysis

The review panel noted that SBS's mission and vision are clearly published on its website. It also took note of the five strategic goals as set out in the Strategic Plan 2020-24:

- Foster academic excellence and student achievement on all educational levels
- Improve the institutional effectiveness.
- Increase our applied research productivity and impact.
- Ensure further institutional growth and community engagement.
- Ensure financial and sustainable stability.

Each strategic goal was covered in the interviews during the site visit and pertinent comments may be found in the relevant sections of this report. (See standards 3 and 4).

The review panel was able to look at a table setting out SBS's KPI Data which SBS believes ensures that the quality assurance system systematically supports the achievement of the SBS Mission and the implementation of its strategy. It is clear that the data allows the institution to see where mission components are fulfilled, and goals are met; it also allows the School to see where improvements are still to be made. For example, staff diversity in terms of gender, a topic that the panel discussed at various meetings during the site visit, is still a work in progress in relation to faculty. Members of the BAB told the review panel that there is awareness cross the

institution that there is work to be done in this area.

However, the review panel disagreed with the assertion in the SAR that, "With sixty Handbooks referring to KPIs, the Management Cockpit is well aligned with the mission of the organization, supporting the institution in successfully executing the strategy… Given the size of the organization, this is adequate and a sound basis for future growth". The SAR also stated that "The quality assurance system is well incorporated into the strategy of SBS and efficiently supports its development. It includes goals and processes that secure the implementation". The panel's view is that the current quality assurance system is neither as efficient as it could be, nor is it appropriate to the size of the institution (see 1.1).

The BAB and members of the SBS senior management spoke to the review panel of the clear development of the mission and vision of SBS over the last few years. In discussion, the panel learned of key aspects of the School that relate to the achievement of the vision and of the strategic goals. In particular, SBS believes that the following clearly impact on mission, vision and strategy:

- The small size of the School, which allows for attention to be paid to each individual student
- The practical focus and application of the programmes which is SBS's particular unique selling point (USP) and
- The focus on internationalisation. The School teaches in English and recruits a significant majority of its students from overseas.

It was clear to the panel, through discussion with internal and external stakeholders, that these topics are indeed embedded in the mission of the School and impact on the achievement of the strategic goals. SBS's specific characteristics are well recognised (and appreciated) internally and externally.

However, in discussion, the review panel was told that the dashboard and the indicators are still relatively new and not yet completely embedded; their utility has not yet been robustly tested. Due to the size of the institution and the part-time status of many of the students, the panel could see that this does not yet constitute a problem as monitoring takes place through frequent and easy discussion and implementation of revisions is facilitated as a result of the duplication of roles that is often apparent in a small institution. However, the panel is of the opinion that this is not sustainable and that there is a need for more formal use of the KPIs, the institutional cockpit and dashboard to monitor the strategic goals as well as the development of a risk strategy. The panel came to this conclusion in its consideration of responses to questions around the strategic plan and goals that it read. For example, SBS recognises that the lack of recognition in Switzerland as a problem but there is no action line for this in the strategic plan. Potentially, student recruitment may change due to a possible decrease in international student numbers as a result of to the current COVID-19 crisis. Currently this cannot be balanced by the recruitment of home students due to the lack of recognition in Switzerland. Strategic goal five (financial and sustainable viability) also does not directly address this issue and there is no evidence of any risk assessment having been carried out despite "sound risk management" being one of the key principles set out in the SBS Institutional and Academic Governance Framework.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the panel is of the opinion that, in line with the standard, more formal use of the quality assurance system to support the School by providing evidence that can be clearly used to demonstrate achievement or otherwise of strategic goals, and the development of an accompanying risk management plan should provide the senior management with clear evidence based on the KPIs and the institutional dashboard and cockpit.

The expert group assesses standard 1.2 as **partially** fulfilled.

Condition 3: SBS should embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1).

Condition 4: SBS should develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk.

Standard 1.3: At all levels, all representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall be involved in developing the quality assurance system and in its implementation, in particular students, mid-level faculty staff, professors and administrative and technical staff. Quality assurance responsibilities must be transparently and clearly assigned.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that, "SBS involves all representative groups in its institutional and academic governance, which assures direct and indirect participation in the quality assurance system". Different communication channels are used to ensure that all employees, students, faculty, and other stakeholders have the means to engage with and involved in institutional decision making.

The key principles set out in the SBS Institutional and Academic Governance Framework include the need for "Stakeholders' contribution to the successful development of the institution" and key stakeholders are represented internally on the Supervisory Board (SB), Quality Education Board (QEB), Faculty and Academic Board (FAB), Research Advisory Board (RAB) and Student Council (SC). These stakeholders include faculty and students. External stakeholders are represented on the Business Advisory Board (BAB) and the Alumni Board (AB).

In addition, chairpersons are allowed to invite internal or external advisors to attend meetings depending on the agenda and the Boards may establish sub-committees if required. Examples of this include the Gender Equality Committee, Marketing Enrolment Admission Team (MEAT), Crisis Management Team (CMT) and the Health and Safety Team (HAST). These latter provide a key means by which administrative and technical staff can have an input into the relevant agendas.

Stakeholders are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to quality assurance and enhancement via a specifically titled section in the SBS Quality Education Handbook and the Faculty and Student Handbooks. Such involvement is stimulated through, for example, a series of questions and answers in the Faculty Handbook which stimulate consideration of how a faculty member might engage with the quality enhancement agenda at the local level.

The SAR states that students can, "…contribute to creating and optimizing programs, participating in faculty meetings, and having direct access to the Supervisory Board, Faculty Academic Board via their representative roles". There is also a Student Council (SC) which is the official student representative body and which is integrated into the SBS Institutional and Academic Governance Framework.

Analysis

Through the evidence that it read, such as the Faculty and Student Handbooks, it was clear to the review panel that opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the development of quality assurance processes and their implementation exist. This can be as a member of a committee

or Board or at a more personal level through the prompts provided in the Handbooks. The panel was also told that the size of the institution facilitates interactions between the School and its stakeholders and would agree that this is the case. The panel heard from, for example, members of the Alumni Board, the Student Council and the Business Advisory Board, that their voice was heard via these channels. Alumni that spoke to the panel also confirmed that they are able to provide input into new courses or programmes, particularly those that can't just be taught theoretically.

However, the review panel noted, during discussion with various stakeholders that, whilst they were clear about their involvement in Boards and committees and believed that they had a voice, they were less sure of their direct input into the development and implementation of the quality assurance system at different levels. Students were clear about their opportunities to provide feedback but were unable to cite any examples of where they had observed changes as a result of feedback provided. The panel also noted that there did not appear to be student representation on the SB or the QEB.

The review panel was unclear as to how stakeholders were selected to be members of various Boards or committees and did not see any evidence of a formal nomination or application process.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 1.3 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation 1: The panel recommends that SBS clarify the means by which stakeholders are invited to participate on boards and committees.

Recommendation 2: The panel recommends that all stakeholders receive briefing or information on, specifically, their input into the development and implementation of the quality assurance system.

> Standard 1.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall periodically analyse the relevance of its quality assurance system and make the necessary adjustments.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR informs the reader that SBS relies on cycles of checks, reports, and audits of its processes which vary between one and ten years.

SBS has regularly undertaken external accreditation processes that require it to examine its processes for initial and reaccreditation processes, normally within a seven-to-ten-year cycle. Since SBS is accredited or certified at institutional and/or programmatic levels by four different external institutions, there is an external moderation of SBS quality assurance taking place almost every second year. The SAR states that SBS takes full advantage of these international external audits to learn about best quality practices and identify areas for improvement.

The SAR states that, internally, The SBS Quality Assurance model ensures key areas follow the PDSA model and are also reviewed on a cyclical basis. For example, a review of the mission, vision and strategic planning process is carried out quinquennially whilst a review of governance and planning procedures happens annually.

Analysis

SBS believes that the combination of internal and external quality assurance procedures that it undertakes ensures that it periodically analyses its quality assurance system, the purpose, the relevance of its methodologies, and the pertinence of its performance indicators and outcomes. The aggregated effect of these processes is one of, "…continuous assessment and analysis with corrective measures to take into consideration." In relation to internal processes, the School considers that perhaps a rolling three-year cycle to replace that of five years for the review of the strategic plan might be more appropriate.

SBS also raises the question of whether or not a potential Institute of Applied Sciences needs to undertake the number of accreditations that the School does and whether or not it needs all of the ensuing additions/revisions to its quality assurance system and processes. The review panel would refer the reader to earlier sections in this report, especially sections 1.1 and 1.2.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 1.4 as entirely fulfilled.

Area 2: Governance

Standard 2.1: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the organisational structure and decision-making processes enable the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic objectives.
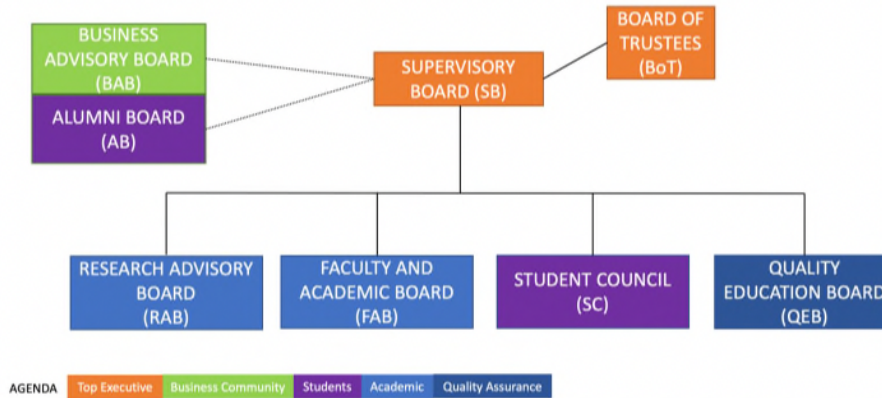
Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that SBS's governance structure is constructed so as to operationalise the School's vision and mission and in line with the following principles:

- Complying with legal requirements of SBS Swiss Business School GmbH registered as a limited corporation (GmbH) in Switzerland

- Fulfilling the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

- Including all the relevant stakeholder groups

- Satisfying quality assurance requirements of accreditation and certification bodies

A governance chart was provided (see below) to show the different internal and external constituencies and how they interact with each other. SBS believes that he structure complies with quality assurance expectations and is adapted to the institution's modest size. The SAR states that, "The "top-down" decision- making flow is balanced with a "bottom-up" and horizontal flow of information, allowing a collective and informed decision-making process on each level of the organization".

SBS SWISS BUSINESS SCHOOL - GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

As SBS Swiss Business School GmbH is a limited corporation registered in Switzerland, the Board of Trustees (BoT) represents the shareholders' interests and provides direction to the Supervisory Board (SB) as well as ensuring that regulations applicable to all the other boards are observed.
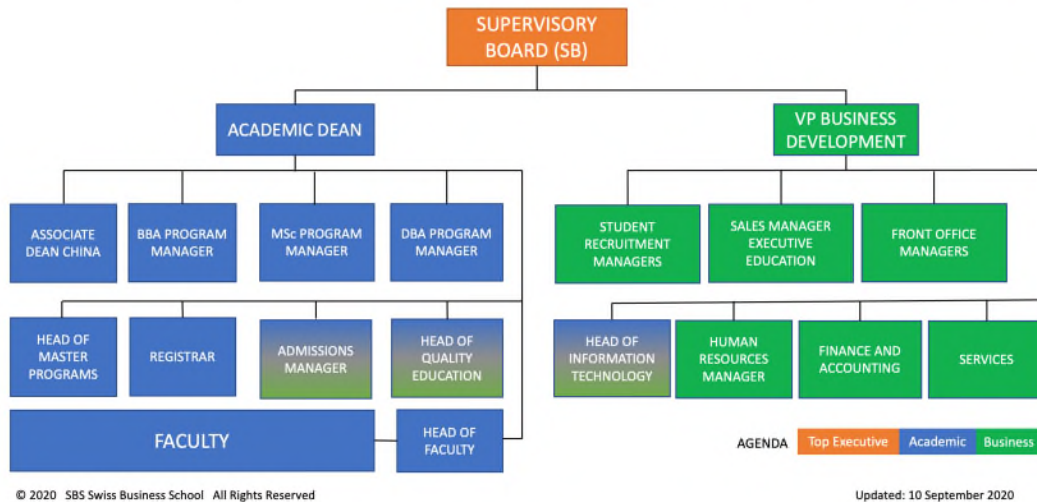
The SB, chaired by the President, has established a series of Boards that represent the key external and internal stakeholders to assist it in meeting the institution's strategic and academic functions and to provide advice. The SB is responsible for directing and controlling the School in line with the directives of the BoT. This includes guiding and monitoring the strategic plan, risk management and the evaluation of the Academic Dean and the Vice President, Business Development.

The Boards that support the SBS BoT and SB are:

- Business Advisory Board (BAB) – External

- Alumni Board (AB) – External

- Faculty and Academic Board (FAB) – Internal

- Research Advisory Board (RAB) – Internal

- Student Council (SC) – Internal

- Quality Education Board (QEB) – Internal

The Boards may establish committees if the focus on a specific matter is needed. (See 1.3 for detail).

SBS's operational structure, illustrated below, functions within the framework of SBS Governance Structure. The SB is responsible for overseeing educational and business-related activities, which are divided into two independent areas. The "Academic Area" headed by the Academic Dean and the "Business Area" headed by the VP Business Development, have close interactions and complement each other to execute the Vision and the Mission of SBS.

SBS SWISS BUSINESS SCHOOL - OPERATIONS

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Analysis

It was clear to the review panel that SBS is a private institution with the founders (owners) active in daily business in key functions. The current decision-making structure is clearly in two parts with the governance structure focusing on rules, regulations, processes, and the evaluation of operation and the operations structure active in daily activities. SBS's adherence to its PDSA cycle ensures that the bodies of the governance structure are mainly active in Plan and Study whilst the operations structure focuses on Do and Adapt.

It was also clear to the review panel that the governance structure ensures a distinction between the academic and the business sides of the organisation. The BoT informed the panel that it has no direct influence on academic side; It communicates with the Supervisory Board but focuses on the business side. It does not participate in the daily decision-making on the academic side and, whilst discussion on resources may take place, this is a dialogue around the vision and mission of the institution and not unilaterally the business of the BoT. The Supervisory Board acts as a mediator or final decision maker if the Academic Dean and the VP Business Development cannot agree on an operational matter.

However, the review panel does not agree with the statement in the SAR that, "The current structure facilitates a fair balance between the different representative groups. Decision-making processes are well aligned "top-down" and "bottom-up" to fulfil the mission and vision of SBS". The two actions identified by SBS in the SAR correspond to the panel's two main concerns:

Proposed action 1: "Despite the consequent improvement in the governance and operations structures… (ensure) that decision processes do not fall back into the pioneer phase with concerns directly raised to the highest authority and decisions taken without substantially involving the different decision-making bodies".

The review panel believes that, currently, the dual roles that are played by the owners of the School create some systematic dilemmas and risks, especially for those in management roles. The current situation, where the owner of the School is also the Academic Dean and where close relations also hold senior posts, does not constitute good governance and leads to a situation where the independence of certain groups is not assured, since all key decisions are made by Boards of which the Academic Dean and close relations are members. This also impacts on academic freedom and its application to all staff, students and committee members. A clear distinction between the ownership and the strategic and academic leadership of the

School is needed.

The review panel noted that a succession plan exists but, on examining it, did not find that it offers any solutions to the matters set out in the previous paragraph.

Proposed action 2: "…to avoid the over-bureaucratization of procedures by applying appropriate processes and regulations adapted to the size of an Institute of University of Applied Sciences…To reduce bureaucracy, SBS will start a project to integrate and simplify processes in 2021".

The review panel concurs that the organizational structure is complex, and that this is further complicated by single members of staff and faculty holding multiple positions. Furthermore, the complex system for quality assurance, as discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2, further complicates the need for a clear lead on aspects of the system. The panel agrees that the action proposed by the School, together with consideration of the conditions and recommendations in this report, should bring some clarity to the situation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the review panel is not convinced that, as per the standard, the organisational structure currently supports the institution in achieving its mission and goals.

The expert group assesses standard 2.1 as **partially** fulfilled.

Condition 5: SBS should carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom.

> Standard 2.2: The quality assurance system shall systematically contribute to providing relevant and current quantitative and qualitative information on which the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector relies to make current and strategic decisions.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR informs us that SBS uses triangulation to combine internal and external measurement systems with qualitative and quantitative data. Pre-defined performance indicators, mainly focusing on students, faculty and operations have been established. The Institutional Management Cockpit consolidates 60 handbooks which all comply with the pre-defined criteria to ensure standardisation and efficiency:

In addition, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are used to steer and evaluate SBS performance in its different activities and these KPIs are considered by the BoT, the SB, the Executive and the management of the School. A standard approach to using the KPIs has been designed, including by topic, of which there are twenty-one.

The SAR states that these mechanisms specifically include the assessment of SBS's Mission and its distinct components through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data which are reported to the SB and BoT. This self-assessment procedure is carried out at regular intervals and, SBS believes, ensures a coherent connection between SBS Mission and its Quality Education.

Analysis

The review panel read in the SAR that, following staff feedback in October 2020 on the Institutional Management Cockpit, it was clear that access to specific information was challenging and time-consuming due to the number of handbooks for operations. The SAR states that SBS has recently reviewed its Institutional Management Cockpit to respond to this feedback by categorizing the 60 handbooks to make them more user-friendly. The review panel was able to look at examples of the cockpit and also of the tables that set integrate the KPIs with the Handbooks and would concur with staff that the information provided is not readily accessible, that some areas did not have KPIs attached to them and that it was difficult to find an overview that indicated SBS's progress against the targets.

In discussions at the site visit, the review panel was informed that SBS was aiming to produce an integrated system that would respond to various accreditation requirements as well as allowing the School to meet its goals in relation to students, their education and so on. The cockpit was introduced in order to provide an overview of data collected but that, currently, the tool, whilst it contains a significant amount of data, is too unwieldly for the size of the institution and, therefore, not user-friendly. The panel was told that accreditation panels find that SBS is producing a lot of good information but that it is dispersed and that there is no overview, something that the panel recognised during this AAQ accreditation visit.

The review panel also concurs with SBS's analysis that, given the extent of the data that is produced, a data management system is needed to mine the data systematically and efficiently. It also agrees that the current data collection system should be more focused, efficient and user friendly but believes that, given the links between this work and the conditions and recommendations about the quality assurance system as a whole, as set out in sections 1.1 and 1.2, this should be a short term rather than a mid-term goal.

The review panel understood the motivation behind the development of the cockpit and the Handbooks and is of the view that the structure is in place to ensure that these become well-embedded aspects of the quality assurance system. However, at the moment, due to the complexity, it is difficult for SBS to monitor all aspects of data on a regular basis and there was no evidence that strategic decisions are taken based on information provided as part of the quality assurance system.

Conclusion

In consideration of the standard, the review panel is of the view that the information provided by the quality system could support SBS more effectively in its strategic decision-making.

The expert group assesses standard 2.2 as **largely** fulfilled.

Recommendation 3: The review panel recommends that SBS expedites its own actions in this area (i.e. to implement a data management system and to revise the current data collection system to make it more focused, efficient and user friendly) as a short-term priority.

> Standard 2.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the representative groups of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector have an appropriate participatory right and that basic conditions are in place allowing them to independently operate.

Description and analysis

Description

In addition to what has been explained under 1.3, the SAR states that the respective duties and

rights of the various Boards and bodies are designed in line with the following principles:

- Boards represent specific interest groups (e.g., shareholders, students, faculty...).

- Each board has clearly defined responsibilities and decision-making power.

- The Supervisory Board headed by the President, is the key element in linking internal and external representative groups within the governance structure.

The SAR set out the contribution of SBS stakeholders in each board:

BoT: directs and controls the business school activities in line with shareholder interests and following the legal responsibilities of the Swiss legislative framework.

SB: directs and controls the business school activities. To ensure comprehensive and informed decision making, the Supervisory Board regularly receives feedback from the BAB and from the AB.

FAB: directs and controls SBS academic matters and represents the voice of the faculty. The FAB autonomously selects and appoints its faculty members. Student representatives also participate in FAB meetings.

Research Advisory Board: directs and controls research activities. It consists of the SBS faculty, the Head of Quality Education, and three external members from SBS partner schools.

Student Council (SC): main role is as a liaison body between the students and the institution. It makes formal recommendations to the administration based on the concerns and suggestions it receives from the students. The administration regularly contacts the SC on institutional matters that affect students. The Student Council has an annual budget of CHF 10.000, financed by SBS.

QEB: assures students, employers, transfer institutions, legislators, accrediting bodies, faculties, employees, and other stakeholders that SBSis fulfilling its mission to promote student success and well-being through excellent educational programs, research and service delivery. Members come from the key academic and administrative functions.

The panel was able to read the responsibilities, term, and membership of all Boards in the SBS Institutional and Academic Governance Framework.

From a logistical standpoint, SBS provides the necessary resources for the Boards to operate independently within their respective outlined duties and rights (i.e. meeting rooms, infrastructure for online meetings, administrative support etc.) External members of the Boards are not compensated unless they serve SBS in a specific capacity (e.g., legal counsel) and students are not paid for their work, nor do they receive ECTS for their work.

During the course of the site visit, the review panel spoke with members of all boards and was assured of their right to participate freely as a member of the appropriate board on which they were a representative. It focused its discussions particularly on students and faculty, having noted that the former are not represented on the SB or the QEB, although they may be invited to the former to speak to particular topics). Students provided clarification to the panel that students are entitled to vote for their student representative but that, sometimes, at the start the year when people don't know each other well, so the programme manager will talk to people she thinks might be interested in the role. They can then talk to the other students and, if there is agreement, they can be elected as class representative. Class representatives are automatically members of the Student Council. In addition, they are invited to FAB meetings twice a year. The students told the panel that they felt that they always have a voice at these meetings

and were able to provide examples of where they had made a suggestion that was actioned, reviewed and further improved and embedded. They were also able to provide examples of areas where they had received feedback on suggestions that could not be actioned.

Members of the Student Council confirmed that they were not compensated for their work on the SC and did not expect to be as they feel that the work enhances their CV and provides them with professional development. Students were enthusiastic about their ability to be involved in SBS and to shape things from the student perspective. However, they were interested in the panel's suggestion that they might receive some kind of certification to recognise their work and experience gained.

The review panel also asked faculty about their input into the development and implementation of the QA system at SBS. Faculty were aware of the documents and processes relating to the quality assurance system. A view was expressed that what happens in the classroom is the most important aspect of quality assurance and that SBS allows lecturers personal freedom to try out new methods and theories in their courses (covering the Plan and Do components of the PDSA cycle). Staff can then evaluate (Study) and react or change (Act). Good practice is then shared at institutional level. This sharing is formal (periodically and also based on input from students at the end of each course) and informal (more regular).

Faculty agreed that processes have developed considerably over the last twenty years and that the quality assurance system is now backed up with a full suite of documents and processes. However, there was feeling that reality goes beyond documentation and that the proactivity that is permitted in terms of fine tuning a seminar, for example, during the running of the course (within the goals of the programme) was as important as process.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 2.3 as entirely fulfilled.

Recommendation 4: The review panel encourages SBS to consider some form of certification for students who are members of the SC, as well as thinking about other appropriate forms of compensation (other than monetary).

> Standard 2.4: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall give consideration to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the completion of its tasks. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that, "SBS Swiss Business School has taken sustainability very seriously over the past years" with the key foundations for its approach to the institution's prosperity, social responsibility, protection of students' interests, and engagement in an eco-friendly environment documented in the SBS Institutional Sustainability Handbook documents the key tenants. This consideration of sustainability was strengthened when SBS signed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord on March 25th, 2019, an initiative that aims to incorporate and embed UN SDGs into SBS programs and community culture.

The SAR says that, "SBS ensures that its sustainable activities are well aligned with the quality assurance model and policy with a systematic approach to planning, implementing, and successfully completing these initiatives through the following key performance criteria". The Institutional Cockpit lists the specific Sustainable Development Goals on the cover page of each SBS

handbook and each academic programme, its courses, final thesis, and grading rubrics have dedicated links to specific Sustainable Development Goals which are set out under the following headings:

- Social Responsibility Goals (institutional)
- Social Responsibility Goals (academic)
- Economic Sustainability Goals
- Environmental Sustainability Goals

Each set of goals under each of the headings has a KPI attached to it. A Sustainability Report is produced bi-annually, summarising the key points of the preceding year and highlighting areas where further improvement is required. The report is submitted to the SB.

Analysis

The review panel was able to read the most recent Sustainability Report and also to look at its inclusion in the Institutional Management Cockpit. The panel was provided with both written and oral evidence of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)s that SBS has set for itself or of the improvements that were required to achieve the goals. The panel saw and heard clear examples of the SDGs being reflected in the curriculum through the use of case studies and class discussions on how students perceive news and media and impact of this on their views on global futures. Students write a report connected with sustainability during their internship. If the project does not allow for specific work on sustainability then the report must include a paragraph saying what the potential impact of the topic would be on sustainability.

The review panel also learned that work with different international partners provided a different perspective on the concept of sustainability.

In response to questions, the review panel was told that SBS decided to sign the SDG Accord for several reasons: it provided more support in terms of what the institution was trying to do in the early phases of this work and allows them to embed what they are doing by requiring two SDGs to be embedded in the rubrics of each course. The SDG Accord is also well known internationally and is included in the Times Higher Education Supplement Impact Rankings. The School said that it would be keen to look into other initiatives in the future but wanted to ensure that it was taking the correct initial steps.

The review panel also learned that a civic engagement survey is distributed annually to all students and that the student exit surveys include questions about sustainability. In this way, SBS measures how far sustainability was embedded in the programme. Sustainability weeks are held for students and all of these opportunities for engagement provide material for discussion in class. Teaching is further impacted by the fact that research faculty have chosen sustainability as a focus.

The review panel noted that, as a result of the current Sustainability Report, improvements were made in the first evaluation cycle across all criteria. SBS is keen to ensure that it does not lose momentum in this regard and this will be checked via the next report.

The review panel was not in agreement with SBS's view on its economic sustainability, nor that the risk register and succession planning mitigated against any risk. These matters are covered in section 1.2 of this report and the condition under that standard should be noted.

Conclusion

Condition number 4 in standard 1.2 is relevant to the fulfilment of this standard.

The expert group assesses standard 2.4 as partially fulfilled.

Standard 2.5: To carry out its tasks, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall promote equal opportunities and actual gender equality for its staff and students. The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector sets objectives in this area and also implements them.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that, "SBS is an equal opportunity provider committed to the idea of fairness and non-discrimination based on religion, race, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. As such, SBS is opposed to all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination". SBS expects all of its staff and students to uphold and defend these principles. SBS has published an Equal Opportunity & Diversity Handbook in which it sets out its policy in this regard and provides information about Swiss legal regulations. An annual report is provided to the SB on the subject of sexual harassment; due to there being no reported cases, there is no current report.

Complaints by students are monitored and evaluated by the SBS Legal Counsel. The process for this is set out in the SBS Equal Opportunity & Diversity Handbook.

Presently the student body is a diverse one with approximately 46% female and 54% male student from 68 different nationalities. Conversely, faculty are 81% male and 19% female – the SBS target for 2021 is 75% male and 25% female. Women are well represented in terms of managerial positions but equality in gender remains particularly challenging in faculty composition with clearly less than 50% of female faculty. A Gender Equality Committee has been established to focus on this matter.

Analysis

In relation to the student body, it is diverse in terms of gender and nationality. Students who spoke to the review panel confirmed that they found the international environment beneficial to their learning experience and appreciated mixed study groups and international speakers. For example, discussions about ethics are much more interesting when there is a mix of cultures in a group. Students also liked the fact that study groups changed regularly, thus increasing exposure to different cultures and backgrounds.

For SBS, the campus atmosphere is an important aspect of quality assurance with a KPI that measures this criterion in line with UN requirements for educational institutions. The diversity of the student (and staff) body ensures that this is rarely a matter for concern. This was confirmed by both students and administrative staff who spoke to the review panel.

The review panel discussed the matter of the gender imbalance with faculty and senior management. Gender parity remains a challenge in this regard and the panel was told that there are not enough qualified female applicants on the market. In an effort to mitigate against this, if a female and male applicant for a post have the same qualifications, the female will be offered the post. However, Swiss law prevents the employment of a substantially less qualified candidate for a position and SBS will always seek to recruit faculty who are qualified to one level above the one that they will teach. A female member of faculty confirmed that she had never felt discriminated against at SBS and, indeed, felt quite the reverse.

The review panel noted that, unlike the faculty, the staff is predominantly female, starting with the Vice-President for Business Development, the Head of Master Programmes, the Head of the BBA and MSc Programmes, the Registrar, and the Admissions Manager who are all female.

The review panel noted the difficulties described in finding appropriately qualified female faculty.

Nonetheless, it is of the view that SBS is actively seeking to improve the gender balance of its faculty and would encourage the focus of the workforce diversity project to increase the percentage of female faculty annually. It would also encourage SBS to further consider its strategy for managing the situation.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 2.5 as entirely fulfilled.

Area 3: Teaching, research and services

Standard 3.1: The activities of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall correspond to its type, specific features and strategic objectives. They shall mainly relate to teaching, research and services and be carried out in accordance with the principle of freedom and independence within the limits of the mandate of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that SBS Swiss Business School was founded in 1998 to provide Tertiary A level business administration programs and further education programs to local and international students. The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 sets out the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the mission is also set out in the SBS Swiss Business School GmbH's incorporation act. The states that SBS's activities are in line with the institution, its mission, characteristics and strategic objectives; that they focus on teaching, research and services and are conducted according to the principles of freedom and independence as well as aligned with SBS mission.

The SBS regulations and guidelines were based on the legal framework within which the School sits, i.e. Freedom of Teaching and Research explicitly guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation (Art. 20) (link) and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (link), which became legally binding in 2009. Academic freedom also figures centrally in the Council of Europe's activities, of which Switzerland has obtained membership. Lastly, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR) (link) emphasized that the "right to education" can only be enjoyed if accompanied by the academic freedom of staff and students.

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are defined in the curriculum for Bachelor, Master, and Further education programmes, as well as the content of the programme and teaching and learning methods. These are also set out in the respective SBS SBS Quality Assurance and Enhancement Workbook. Research protocols are set out in the Research-Based Learning Handbook. The principle of academic freedom is enshrined in the Policy of Academic Freedom which appears in the Faculty Handbook and in a specific clause in the teaching agreement. The FAB determines learning outcomes, classroom teaching, and self-directed learning ratios but individual lecturers are responsible for the specific content of courses.

For funding and sponsoring requests, researchers and funders must sign the European Charter for Researchers.

SBS offers programmes according to the Swiss National Education Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) as follows:

The Bachelor of Business Administration programme (designed according to Cycle 1 and FQ-

EHEA level 6, 180 ECTS). Specialisations: International Management, Marketing, Entrepreneurship.

Master programmes comply with Cycle 2 and FQ-EHEA level 7,90 ECTS. Specialisation: International Business.

Further education:

Master of Business Administration (90 ECTS). Specialisations: International Management, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Global Finance, and Banking, Human Resource Management.

Executive MBA program (70 ECTS) with a major in International Management.

SBS curricula are focused around problem-solving skills and are practice-oriented. They also focus on SBS's "4 C's": **C**ommunication, **C**ritical thinking, **C**reativity, **C**ollaboration which are set out in the Admissions Handbook.

The SAR states that, "The development of these problem-solving and 4 C's competencies is systematically supported by experiential learning at the workplace. It is reflected in the Bachelor and Master programs requiring students to have gained a minimum of one-year work experience before graduation. Students in further education must have at least two years of work experience before entering their programs". The curricula are globally oriented with a modular, student-centred focus. Globally oriented courses and intercultural awareness are made available to the students from the start of their programme; very practically, all courses are taught in English, and student the student body itself is extremely international. Bachelor students must also learn German to better integrate into the local environment and must supplement their intercultural experience by completing an internship in Switzerland or abroad.

The Bachelor programme has a common first year, with students choosing their specialisation (International Management, Entrepreneurship or Marketing) at the beginning of the second year. Courses are regularly linked to the business world through with company visits and guest speakers from industry and global case studies. The Masters programme offers the same features.

All programmes aim to deliver students who are critical thinkers, are able to solve evidence-based questions from the real world and who are reflective practitioners. The SAR says, "Students work extensively with case studies, write research papers, have classes on research methods, and produce an individual thesis…Students can freely choose the topic, in line with academic freedom".

In relation to research, the SAR states that, "SBS's research strategy focuses on problem-solving and a rational approach to organizations".

Research activities have increased over the years and the review panel was provided with information on the SBS "Journal of Applied Business Research." The Research Advisory Board (RAB), is responsible for developing the SBS research strategy. The RAB Research Strategy focuses on the following topics:

- Demography and Globalization

- International Entrepreneurship/Education

- International and Project Management

- Entrepreneurial Finance

- Zurich Airport Region

The SAR states that research output is measured via different quantitative tools including citations, h-index, Google Scholar, ORCID, and other tools. The entire SBS research budget corresponds to roughly 8% of the annual turnover. The budget is available in the research strategy. There are plans to increase the research budget with using party funds, mainly from industrial projects. SBS believes that these funded projects will add a maximum of 20% to the existing budget in the coming years.

Since 2015, SBS has been developing a culture and system of academic research integrity on campus. Thesis works, research articles from students and researchers' papers undergo a plagiarism check through different software tools such as Urkund and PlagScan.

In terms of quality assurance of research, the Annual Research Report, which combines a self-evaluation of research performance and recommendations for improvement, is shared with the SB, FAB, and QEB. Faculty members participate in other research conferences and act as jury members to review thesis works; they also participate in the editorial board of peer-reviewed journals.

The SAR states that, "The integration of the results from SBS Applied Research, and the linkages between teaching and research, are fundamental to assure the compliance of SBS educational programs with the University of Applied Institute mandate, confirming the institution's Tertiary A positioning…SBS Faculty update their course materials and share research findings with their students, so there is better student engagement, satisfaction with the relevance of the courses, and increased confidence as learners and independent thinkers".

The SAR provided information on the services provided to prospective and recruited students in terms of entry and student visas, with the SBS Website providing information on a range of topics from entry requirements to accommodation and living in Zurich. Students may seek careers advice directly from the programme and an external consultancy supports students with CV development and job placement. This service is included in their tuition fee and is provided externally to allow for confidentiality.

In line with Universities of Applied Sciences who offer their knowledge and skills to third parties as a service, SBS has included this element in its mission. It provides courses for companies in the Zurich Airport area and organizes seminars for foreign colleges and universities covering topics related to leadership or the Swiss Banking system. SBS has also carried out a follow-up survey on Covid-19 research to find out the impact of the pandemic on 580 companies.

Analysis

The review panel discussed the SBS programmes with senior management, faculty and students. It was provided with examples of the practical orientation of the programmes by all groups; in particular the students informed the panel about the practical focus of the compulsory thesis with a clear understanding of the problem-solving element of this piece of assessment. They also informed the panel that Bachelors students normally visit two companies during the programme and that this had been resolved during the COVID-19 crisis by having case studies for analysis. Bachelors students also confirmed that it is mandatory for them to undertake an internship and that they are supported to do so. All students, especially those from the MBA and EMBA programmes, appreciated the guest speakers from industry in terms of gaining practical insight into the operation of a company and the fact that there is always a question-and-answer section during such lectures.

Faculty who spoke to the review panel explained that teaching included very practical measures such as case-studies and problem-solving assignments. All of the adjunct staff are also experi-

enced practitioners in their field and students expressed their appreciation of this fact. In addition, faculty were at pains to point out that the practical input to programmes allows students to learn from mistakes in a safe environment; for example, students on the MBA programme have the option to do an Active Learning Project in place of a thesis. The application of the practical element is very evidence in such an assignment. Sometimes these projects do not wholly succeed but the key for the faculty and staff in this case, is the learning that is achieved from the outcome.

Faculty informed the review panel that research materials are promoted in the classroom and that this can include student research. It was noted that, due to the use of, for example, Plag-Scan, the academic integrity in students' research papers is improving. In practical terms, evidence of the integration of research into teaching is provided through the polls that are carried out in each programme; an interview with faculty to find out what they are researching and how much of that research is reflected in the course materials. SBS has been monitoring this over the last four years. The School is also aiming to increase the amount of sponsored and grant-based research with a view to ensuring that this impacts on course materials. To date, caution has been exercised in relation to external research funding to ensure that academic integrity is not compromised and there is currently no external funding of research.

The panel asked senior management and faculty how SBS fosters and supports research activity. Both groups said that the importance of research and practical application is stressed to all faculty, whether full-time or adjunct. Young researchers are offered internal and external courses or training to help them with learning to design a research project and how to consider different research topics. Young researchers are also mentored and this may begin when they are a student at SBS through support for their thesis. Students are also invited to be involved in applied research activities. A budget is available to allow early career and young researchers to attend conferences.

It was confirmed that time allocation does not include time for research; senior management raised the point that adjunct faculty are compensated upon publication. Faculty said that they would like to participate more in international conferences and to compete for international projects. SBS senior management is hopeful that a stronger integration into the Swiss network of Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences if their accreditation process is successful, will assist with its efforts to support and develop research.

The review panel was told that a research strategy is in place. The RAB is looking at metrics on the impact of the research being carried out. SBS would like to 'institutionalise' what it is doing in this regard, for example to ensure that the Institutional Management Cockpit is effective in supporting research. The panel was provided with a description of how the research strategy worked in practice; however, it noted that the research strategy/policy was not particularly well-known amongst faculty, one of who alluded to the fact that, "there may not be a formal policy…" The panel was not convinced of the existence of a clear research strategy despite the fact that faculty who spoke to the panel agreed that research is, "welcome, compensated and supported".

The review panel had noted that SBS has established its own publication series (Journal of Applied Research) rather than using established publication routes. It was explained that this was because the School is aiming to provide articles of interest to those in business who are interested in how research can impact on application. The journal is open to submissions globally. However, the panel is of the opinion that faculty should be encouraged to publish more widely to improve their research reputation and output.

In conclusion, the review panel is clear that teaching and research are offered in accordance with SBS's mission, specific features and strategic objectives. However, in relation to research, the panel was concerned to find that time is not specifically allocated for this function and that faculty were not clear on the institutional research strategy or framework. In the panel's view it is

essential that SBS now formulates a clear research strategy that is in line with its mission. The panel also noted that there are only four members of full-time faculty and is concerned that this could impact on the success of the School's research strategy.

The review panel understood that it is not obligatory for SBS to be active in the field of services as a consulting service. However, SBS is reasonably active in the field of further education, offering EMBA and MBA studies. If SBS grows its research activity, might be possible for them to be active in the field of contract research, which is also a service.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the review panel finds that the research function of SBS does not align with the standard.

The expert group assesses standard 3.1 as **partially** fulfilled.

Condition 6: SBS should formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy.

Recommendation 5: The review panel also recommends that SBS ensure that the research strategy is disseminated to all relevant staff.

> Standard 3.2: The quality assurance system shall provide for a periodic evaluation of teaching and research activities, of services and of results achieved in these areas.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR describes the processes in place by which SBS periodically evaluates its teaching, research and services. These evaluations are conducted via internal and external quality assurance in line with the PDSA Cycle. Qualitative and quantitative methods are used to collect and analyse data. (See also sections 1.1 and 1.2). The SAR states that, "The assessment is periodic, systematic, and according to a prescribed process, as stipulated in the SBS BBA/MBA Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbooks and the Annual Academic Report".

Responsibility lies with the relevant board or member/team of staff/faculty to ensure that the data gathered are used and analysed appropriately through the "Study" component of the PDSA Quality Cycle. Each staff function involved in the teaching and academic management, including that of the Academic Dean, is subject to periodic reviews. In the case of faculty, the periodic review of their programmes also yields information on their role in the programme. Evaluations of the staff role take place annually. The criteria used for the review process are set out in the Faculty Appraisal Template, and are based on standards for teaching, research/creative activity, and service.

SBS regularly samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions through an internal moderation process. The SAR states that it acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness and that the internal moderation process supports the credibility of assessments by ensuring that assessments are valid and grade judgments are verified. Each semester, the Head of Faculty and the Head of Quality Education review students' examinations to see if the grading was fair and appropriate. If judgments are not consistent with the grading scheme, the Head of Faculty will correspond with the Academic Dean to make recommendations for improvement. The process is set out in the SBS Internal Verification Handbook which clarifies the internal moderation schedule, the responsibilities of the involved staff members, and the specific tasks of verifiers and assessors.

Assessment processes are also externally modified on a regular basis with provision for specific audits as necessary.

In relation to research, the SAR states that the RAB is responsible for the direction of applied research at SBS, specifying the research objectives, the key themes, the research strategy, how to obtain a grant, training of young researchers, and the code of conduct. The RAB also functions as a Research Ethics Committee for thesis works and other publications. The SAR also says that the RAB evaluates the researchers' yearly performance, monitors the research budget and evaluates the achievement of the annual targets. An annual report is written for the SB.

Like teaching faculty, researchers are annually evaluated on specific criteria, as are staff with business and support service functions, including the Vice-President for Business Development and the Registrar.

All employees also undertake an annual appraisal with a view to highlighting opportunities for personal development. Internal services (e.g., the library) are also evaluated via student surveys on a regular basis.

That SAR states that, "SBS supports the local community with services. This includes room rentals for short educational programs of other academic institutions or companies. Feedback is here on a case by case and person to person basis. Due to the low volume, no systematic evaluation procedures are in place".

Analysis

The review panel spoke to students and faculty about their input into the regular evaluation of SBS's activities. Faculty gave the panel examples of how they told the panel that they were involved in the PDSA cycle at both programme and course level and explained how ideas can be taken to Academic Board to show how previous practice would be impacted (Planning), then incorporated (Doing). Faculty come together twice a year at the FAB a) to discuss student performance but also, b) to receive student course evaluation results. Currently, the student response rate to surveys is approximately 80%. Recently, a process has been introduced whereby the Faculty also complete a template setting out their views on how their courses have functioned. The Head of Faculty then initiates a discussion with each faculty member to discuss the template, the outcomes of student evaluations and any other pertinent matters. Faculty confirmed that this was a supportive process and one which yielded positive outcomes in terms of development opportunities. Faculty also reported that the Academic Dean regularly visits classes. This too was universally viewed positively as an objective view on teaching practice. Faculty said that the feedback is constructive and a valuable support. They also saw the visits as a positive affirmation and an opportunity to engage someone who is not necessarily a subject specialist. Faculty also appreciated the fact that the Academic Dean will remain during the class break to talk to students.

In terms of communicating any changes as a result of student feedback to the student body, faculty explained that this could be difficult as students do not experience the changes they suggest; however, the review panel was informed that SBS is currently thinking about trying to introduce a formal mechanism that would involve the programme manager. This involves consideration of what should be communicated and how as the must be constructive. At the moment, some feedback is provided via email or the i-learn portal.

Informally, due to the size and ethos of the institution, there is significant day-to-day communication between faculty and students.

In addition, the review panel was provided with the example of student evaluation of the MBA and EMBA programmes where difficulties are experienced due to the fact that the courses are

offered intensively over 2-3 days. However, faculty pointed out that any issues become very clear after the student assessment, when it becomes apparent if there are any problems.

Students informed the review panel that, if an issue is raised it can be discussed with the programme manager and that it will then pass to the FAB for consideration. At the FAB, all class representatives are asked if there are any matters they wish to discuss. In general, students believe that matters are resolved quickly. They also reported that SBS has managed the COVID-19 crisis well.

Students can choose whether to go to the SC or to go directly to the programme manager. If there is a problem with a lecturer, the student can raise this at a feedback session with the lecturer. The example given in the student meeting was well-managed and the outcome positive, with the students' concerns being taken on board. However, there is no formal process for the resolution of problems; such a process would be useful in the case of more difficult issues that cannot be easily or informally resolved.

Students told the review panel that, in relation to their assessment, they upload these onto the iLearn platform and that they receive results and feedback within a week. The feedback is constructive and contains praise and suggestions for improvement and there is time at the next session for discussion due to small class sizes (or feedback can be discussed privately). Students were aware of the process they needed to follow if they wished to appeal a grade or an assessment, although none had any experience of doing so. Survey results indicate that students find assessments transparent and the grading fair and valid.

In relation to the monitoring and evaluation of research, faculty spoke of regular discussions about research and its integration, its relation to the practical aspect of courses etc. Research also forms part of the staff appraisal carried out by the Head of Faculty as described above.

Academic quality assurance is duly completed, with programs and courses evaluated on a prescribed cyclical basis. Qualitative and quantitative methods are used for assessing all academic practices and services. Internal and external moderation is used regularly to complement the overall process. They are an essential trigger for taking action in the PDCA cycle.

Research is evaluated against internal and external criteria. Due to the evaluations and actions taken over the past years, research output has gradually increased, and the peer-reviewed publications have become more visible. The Publication List (link) substantiates this. However, SBS management told the review panel that, although a dedicated group of researchers is involved in research that culminates in the publication of peer-reviewed articles, this group needs to grow by one or two researchers in 2021-2022 in order to consolidate the SBS research portfolio. It was felt that the training of young researchers could also further improve.

Internal services are also surveyed, and improvements are made based on the feedback. Feedback from external customers for services is positive although SBS believes that more local contacts need to be established in order to increase the services portfolio.

The review panel can confirm that all of the groups that it spoke to were able to provide day-to-day examples of evaluation of activities and of the ensuing results and changes. However, no one spoke to the panel of a formal monitoring and/or periodic review process with the result that the systemic evaluation of activities is lost in the more 'ad hoc' discussions that take place. Such systemic processes were also not described in the SAR under this standard.

The review panel also noted a repetition of the examples offered by all groups. It would have been interested to hear of a broader range of examples of evaluation and results.

Conclusion

With relation to research, the review panel heard little evidence to suggest that there is a periodic evaluation process in place; this needs to be established as part of the conditions set for standard 3.1 and in order to align with standard 3.2.

The expert group assesses standard 3.2 as **partially** fulfilled.

SBS should take into account the conditions set under standards 1.1 and 1.2 in order to achieve fulfilment with this standard. In addition:

Condition 7: SBS's quality assurance system shall provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see 3.1).

> Standard 3.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that principles and objectives linked to the European Higher Education Area are taken into consideration.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR described how the SBS quality assurance system ensures the key elements of the European Higher Education Area's principles and objectives, including the use of ECTS, alignment with the FQ-EHEA, student and staff mobility and international cooperation.

SBS Bachelor and Masters programmes are designed to align with the Bologna Guidelines for ECTS and are specified at either level 6 (Bachelor) or 7 (Masters and MBA/EMBA) of the FQ-EHEA. External assessments of the programmes and the curricula have confirmed that the programmes are well-aligned. Students receive a Diploma, a Transcript of Records, and a Diploma Supplement upon completion of their studies. The latter follows the model provided by the European Commission.

The SAR describes how SBS has managed the issue of student mobility, given that its current accreditation status means that enrolled students cannot participate in the Erasmus+ programme. The School believes that the international nature of its recruitment and campus, together with a multi-national faculty more than mitigates against this situation (see also section 2.5). In addition, international students who undertake their internships in Switzerland and enhancing their exposure to a different working culture. The structure of the degree programmes allows students to work internationally and transfer credits with other educational institutions.

The SAR explains that staff mobility is facilitated by the fact that SBS has partners located in the EU; faculty travel and teach in these other institutions. This has the benefits of enhancing their cultural awareness, contributing to the sharing of good practice, and improving teaching methods and learning experiences. Some faculty members are also collaborating in research projects/papers with peers from other institutions as well as participating in thesis defence processes at partner institutions.

The SAR states that, "SBS's international strategy is mirrored in a global-oriented curriculum and international research approach". Within the European Union, SBS works with Banku Augstskola Riga, Latvia (double degree), and WSB School of Banking in Poland. It also has research agreements with the BA School of Business and Finance - Banku Augstskola in Riga and the Indian Institute for Banking and Finance (IIFB) in New Delhi. Both of these institutions organize research conferences in which SBS researchers participate and present. SBS students have presented in Riga and faculty are working on common research projects.

Analysis

The review panel discussed the issue of staff mobility with faculty. There was enthusiasm about

the opportunities afforded by work with colleagues in Riga and Kazakhstan. It was explained that faculty are not required to travel but that there are good opportunities for staff to travel either to teach or to participate in an international conference or training programme. SBS believes that international cooperation with other institutions in the EHEA has a positive impact on research activities in that faculty have said that it helps them improve their cross-cultural understanding and gives them a broader perspective on research techniques.

The review panel heard that, as the majority of students are international, they are less interested in further outbound mobility. The students who spoke to the panel confirmed that they benefited from the international environment in which they were studying (see also section 2.5).

SBS's own analysis of the current situation is it supports the mobility of the students as far as it can within the limitations and that, whilst this is an undesired shortfall, it is outside of the institution's control. The review panel would agree with the institution's view that, "…students still benefit from an international learning environment on campus and international working exposure during internships fulfilling their requirements and expectations". The panel suggests that further broadening the School's range of international partners will increase the benefits described.

SBS staff confirmed that, if there is a successful outcome for this accreditation, participating in, for example, Erasmus Plus, is planned.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 3.3 as entirely fulfilled.

> Standard 3.4: The quality assurance system shall ensure compliance with the criteria for admission, for the assessment of the student performance and for issuing final diplomas according to the mission of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. These criteria shall be defined, communicated and applied systematically, transparently and consistently.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that, in considering the admission of any student, SBS works in line with Swiss Federal legislation. It says that, "Factors for consideration include educational background, work experience, personal recommendations or reference letters, Grade Point Average, test scores, desire, and willingness to learn. No applicant will be denied admission to SBS Swiss Business School based on race, colour, sex, national or ethnic origin". SBS also does not discriminate on the basis of physical or mental disabilities of those who are otherwise eligible for admission to the institution. If an applicant disagrees with the admissions decision, s/he can appeal through a lawyer proposed by SBS at their own cost.

The process for considering an application is set out in the SBS Admissions Handbook and it is the responsibility of the Admissions Team (MEAT) to ensure that due process is followed. Students must take an admissions examination that tests English language skills, mathematics, and critical thinking. Prospective students who do not meet all the requirements may be considered for "conditional acceptance" based on individual review. The MEAT validates the admissions decisions and will use the 4 C's (**C**ommunication, **C**ritical thinking, **C**reativity, **C**ollaboration) in addition to the Admissions Process when considering applications.

The SAR states that full documentation and requirements for admissions are published and always up to date on the SBS homepage and accessible to all users, whilst the most important internal materials are available on the intranet or the SBS iLearn portal (link).

In relation to student assessment, the SAR states that all courses are subject to mid-term and final examination assessments, with performance being assessed on a pass/fail basis. This allows flexibility for formative and summative assessments.

The grading scale used is from 4.0 to 0.0 (Grade Point Average) with 4.0 being the highest grade. The minimum pass mark is 2.0 for bachelor and 3.0 for Master and Further education. Failed final examinations may be repeated once.

The assessment portfolio includes a variety of activities and these are supported by the different kinds of class-based and assessment activities. The final integrative project, the thesis, is subject to a group (thesis jury) assessment.

The final grades are submitted to the program managers and validated by the FAB. The registrar enters the final grades into the "MySBS" platform and the students can see their provisional transcript. In the case of a student challenging an academic decision, mitigating circumstances are considered by the FAB in accordance with the SBS Mitigation Handbook. Complicated issues are escalated to SBS's Corporate Lawyer.

Special provisions for teaching, learning, and assessments are made for students with special needs in accordance with the SBS Students with Additional Needs Handbook.

The SAR states that regulations are in place for the award of credits and degrees with each course having an ECTS weighting. Acquiring credits is always subject to passing an examination. Failed courses may only be repeated once in the academic year following the failed final exam. The thesis must be completed within two semesters of admission to the thesis work. In case of a second attempt for the thesis, the penalty is 20% of the mark.

In alignment with the credits and awards policy, the credits are validated by the FAB, and the Registrar issues the final transcripts, the degree, and the diploma supplement.

Internships are assessed by the employer and graded by a member of SBS faculty.

Analysis

The review panel discussed the admissions regulations with staff and students. Both were clear about the requirements and students told the panel that they had had no difficulty in accessing them. Due to the international application pool for admission, the evaluation of diplomas, degrees, certificates are challenging and SBS suggests that some additional training is needed for the MEAT team members to consolidate their expertise in dealing with specific admission cases and in making decisions respecting the integrity and equal opportunity.

The review panel notes that Article 25 HFKG states that, for admission to a University of Applied Sciences and Institutes, students with a baccalaureate from a grammar school must have at least one year's work experience that has provided practical and theoretical knowledge in an occupation related to the field of specialisation. The Verordnung des WBF über die Zulassung zu Fachhochschulstudien SR 414.715 confirms this. SBS does not currently fulfil this requirement because of regulations of the canton of Zurich concerning work permits. On achieving accreditation, SBS will have the opportunity to align with this requirement. The review panel, therefore, has formulated a condition to ensure that SBS will change its admission regulations.

The review panel welcomes the intention of SBS to improve opportunities for internships for students in Switzerland in cooperation with the Cantons after accreditation and recommends pursuing this approach.

Staff also confirmed that there is no pressure to conform to the KPI of 60% Swiss/40% international in terms of recruitment.

Students who spoke to the review panel said that they were made aware of assessment criteria through various mechanism which began during introduction days one week before courses start. These events were appreciated by students as means of meet programme managers, attending workshops, team building, meeting other students including those from other years etc. Students described these introduction days as a 'very good experience'.

The review panel was of the view that, in order to ensure compliance with this standard, SBS must revise its admissions regulations post-accreditation.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 3.4 as partially fulfilled.

Condition 8: SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law.

Recommendation 6: In order to prepare for the future, SBS should begin to recruit students with one year of experience to demonstrate compliance with the law to the accreditation bodies.

Area 4: Resources

> Standard 4.1: With its competent authorities, the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall assure that its personnel resources, infrastructure and financial means allow for operating on a going concern basis and for achieving its strategic objectives. The origin and allocation of financial resources and financing conditions shall be transparent.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR explains that SBS, as an independent entity, does not receive any external funding either from the state, sponsors, donations or endowment funds. Income revenue is generated solely from tuition fees and facility rentals. Operating costs are entirely covered by tuition fees (95%) and revenues from services (5%) provided by SBS to third parties. Salaries account for 36% to 48 % of the entire costs and the research budget represents around 8% of the annual revenue.

The SBS capital procedures have been designed to provide clear guidance on how any project or expenditure should be brought to the attention of the VP of Business Development. A key requirement is that all such projects must have a clear link with the SBS strategic plan. Capital expenditure decisions above certain amounts are taken in consultation with the BoT to whom VP of Business Development reports. Each unit within SBS has a budget, which is reviewed annually. Improvements and budget variances are discussed with the related stakeholders. There are annual budgets for program management, marketing, sales, IT, research, front office operations, alumni events, and Student Council operations. The budgets are established by the beginning of each academic year and reviewed at the end of either the academic year or the calendar year.

The SAR states that SBS has a very conservative financial policy and that the institution has built sufficient capital reserves to cover eventualities for an extended period. Future investments are planned for student expansion and increased research and services activities. A worst-case scenario has been worked out to avoid issues of liquidity and solvency.

The financial review is carried out by one member of the SB and by an independent HMR auditor. Thus, the internal control, which takes place annually and which assures institutional integrity, transparency, and compliance, is followed by an external control to close the SBS books

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and ensure that SBS is transparent, compliant with legal requirements, and operating ethically. An additional external control is carried out by the tax authorities of the Canton Zurich and the social authorities.

All units are involved in the budget planning process in line with the goals of the next period. The SAR states that this is an informal discussion process appropriate for the size of the organization. Recently the budgeting process was improved by giving more units accountability over their budgets.

SBS has a total of 69 employees, comprising 41 faculty members, of which are 4 full-time and 37 adjunct faculty. There are also 6 visiting faculty. The faculty-student ratio is 1:3.
The non-academic team is composed of 10 full-time and part-time administrative employees and some services, such as the cleaning, are outsourced.

In July 2018, SBS moved to the new "SBS Park Campus" in Zurich-Kloten. The new building was designed in cooperation with SBS and the landlord based on sustainability criteria. The premises have a ten-year lease. Student feedback on a need for more modern equipment and an inspiring environment for learning triggered the move.

The SAR states that the iLearn strategy was implemented at undergraduate level in the academic year 2019 and at the start of that academic year, SBS implemented its digitalization strategy for educational programs. The online learning portal (iLearn.sbs.edu) is available for online programs and has recently been used for remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis. The iLearn Portal provides for synchronous online learning and conferencing. The portal supports tutoring and faculty communication and allows students to access courses with learning resources. Grades, provisional transcripts, access to the e-libraries, and the thesis library are available through the MySBS portal, which can also be assessed by students. The IT unit supports the on-site learning experience with additional resources.

SBS has subscriptions to three online libraries, EBSCOhost, Emerald Insight, and MarketLine which are available to all students and faculty. In addition, students and faculty also have access to the internal SBS thesis library, which covers all previously published theses of SBS alumni.

Each student receives the textbook and course materials for each course; this is covered by their tuition fees. The libraries have the necessary books and journals related to the different study fields. Furthermore, students have access to the University of Zurich library as well as the Swiss Library System. A dedicated librarian supports students and researchers, and the campus-based library hours have been extended in response to the BAC's external accreditation report.

Analysis

The review panel was interested to know how SBS ensures financial stability long-term as it believes that sole reliance on tuition fees for income represents a level of risk with regard to the stability of the processes. SBS senior management informed the panel that, in line with the budget description provided above, it aims to use its budgets as planned and within a 5% variance below or above.

An overview of the financial situation is provided by the accountants and the link between the accountants and the BoT is provided by the Academic Dean and the Registrar. The panel was informed that SBS has adopted a conservative approach to its budget and has built up a savings reserve as part of its risk management.

The review panel pursued this line of thought in relation to the risks posed by the COVID-19 crisis and a potential drop in international student numbers. It was informed that SBS used about

20% of its savings to deal with the health crisis and IT is about 10% of the budget spend in 2021 as the School has invested heavily in on-line learning over the last year. This is within the 5% variance. Senior management agreed that there is currently a risk in relation to international student recruitment (in particular on the MBA and EMBA programmes) but was clear that there was no intention to grow student numbers significantly and that any growth would be achieved slowly and steadily. The small size of the School allows for flexibility to adapt programmes if there is interest in an on-line or hybrid programme, for example. SBS is keen to remain adaptable as its main goals is Want to ensure that students get a good experience with good outcomes for the job market.

The above situation was corroborated by members of the BoT, who also confirmed that they were not directly involved in the finances of the institution.

In relation to the motivation for Swiss students to enrol, the review panel was informed that the School attracts niche students and that there will always be a market for a small institution that provides a personal learning experience. If SBS is successful in achieving Swiss accreditation, they would aim surpass the benchmark of having 60% Swiss students and 40% international in 6-7 years.

SBS has experience of surviving with small student numbers and will seek other ways of attracting international students depending on what they are hearing in the market. The panel was informed that the senior management did not see significant financial risks over the next few years. The company is set up in such a way as to ensure that student fees are covered if necessary.

The review panel ascertained that, currently the School does not have a risk register, although there has been discussion of one for IT. It was stressed that, over the last year, the IT department operated without interruption and was able to convert from on-site to on-line in one working week. It also trained faculty to use the on-line tools.

In response to questioning about the new building, the review panel was told that the move was very much welcomed by stakeholders, although the building is empty at the moment due to the pandemic. SBS is very positive about the new premises but is not yet sure what will happen at the end of the lease. The intention is to continue for another 10 years. The review panel was provided with the BBA Student Exit Survey of 2020, in which 83% of the students rated classroom facilities as "Excellent" and 17% as "Good" demonstrating that the investment is paying off. Equally high scores were achieved in relation to the learning and technical resources.

In conclusion, the review panel was assured of the current stability of SBS's financial situation. However, the reliance on tuition fees and the risk that currently surrounds recruitment of both international and home students was not, in the view of the panel, sufficiently mitigated by a sound risk strategy. Nor did the 'Worst Case Scenario' document viewed by the panel provide any further assurance. (See standard 1.2 and condition 4 for further information).

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 4.1 as largely fulfilled.

Recommendation 7: SBS should develop and document a plan through which students are able to finish their studies in any worst-case scenario.

Standard 4.2: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the entire staff is qualified according to the type and specific characteristics of the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector. To this end, it shall also provide for its periodic assessment.

Description and analysis

Description

As stated in 4.1, the SBS academic team consists of 4 FTE faculty, 37 adjunct faculty and 6 visiting faculty. On average, faculty remain with SBS for 7 years and support staff for 4.

The SAR gives the academic qualifications of the faculty are as follows: faculty delivering BSB bachelor programs, 65 % have a Master's degree and 35% a Ph.D. or equivalent degree. For those delivering BSB Master and further education programs, 43% have a Master's degree and 57 % Ph.D. or equivalent degree. Of the 6 visiting lecturers, 50% have a Master and 50% a Ph.D. The 5 members of support staff are all master's degree holders.

Faculty members have qualifications relevant to the specific teaching area they cover. Most faculty members have a successful career within a particular industry or discipline, which is in line with SBS's applied and transfer oriented teaching approach. The SAR emphasises the fact that faculty are not hired unless they have teaching experience is not hired. Most of the faculty teach for other universities or institutes, and so are familiar with higher education didactics. Training for SBS-specific practical and transfer-oriented didactics is provided.

The SAR states that faculty members are indirectly and directly assessed periodically and systematically, according to a process, which is set out in the SBS BBA/MBA Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbooks. In particular:

- The Academic Dean visits classes regularly to see each faculty member at least every three years.

- Faculty members are reviewed for every course by the students. The student evaluation is shared with them, which helps them to reflect on their teaching. The feedback is shared with the Head of Faculty, who does a performance review with the faculty in a personal meeting in a structured way. This is the basis of personal development goals for the next years.

- An external review of the faculty occurs when they teach in the Bachelor of Arts Program in Riga.

The Vice President Business Development carries out an annual performance appraisal of the administrative staff which results in personal development goals for the coming years.

Analysis

The review panel was interested in SBS's view on the fact that it operates with only four full-time staff. The panel was told that, since the School promotes a practical orientation to its programmes, so it needs to recruit people who are practitioners. Thus, while the School needs the 4 FTE members of staff, equally it needs a large number of adjunct faculty. The panel was also told that, although the adjunct faculty are part-time, many have a longstanding relationship with the institution and are included in its business as if they were full-time faculty. They participate in meetings, contribute to personnel development etc. SBS's strategy is to have the right faculty teaching the right subjects and is proud of its long-term relationship with the adjunct faculty and their loyalty to the School.

The review panel was interested in how faculty found time to offer consultancy services alongside teaching and research. It was informed that many faculty are consultants and that, often, this is their main income stream. It was explained that consultancy is a regulated industry and

SBS is not active in this field through choice. If SBS is accredited then it will be in a legal position to carry out such activities.

In terms of ensuring that faculty are appropriate for the School and its mission, in addition to the right qualifications, an applicant would be invited as a guest speaker to see how they engage an audience. Senior management told the review panel that recruited faculty must be passionate as well as being qualified to a level higher than the one they will teach.

The review panel noted that the BBA Student Exit Survey of 2020 demonstrated that 83% of the faculty is perceived as "Good" and 17% as "Fair" in a summary evaluation. The teaching methods of the faculty are rated 17% "Excellent", 67% "Good" and 17% "Fair". SBS believes that the overall perception of faculty is satisfactory but that there is room for improvement, although the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak has created challenges for all faculty.

According to the MBA Student Exit Survey of 2018, 53% of the faculty is perceived as "Excellent", 41% as "Good" and 6% as "Fair", none as "Poor".

The review panel is of the view that the faculty and staff of SBS are appropriate to the institution's vision and mission and, indeed, help the School to achieve the same.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 4.2 as entirely fulfilled.

> Standard 4.3: The quality assurance system shall ensure that the higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector supports the career development of its entire staff, particularly the new generation of scientists.

Description and analysis

Description

As stated in 4.2, faculty and administrative staff are evaluated and appraised individually which leads to individual goals for improvement and development. The SAR states that most faculty teach for other universities or institutes and are, therefore, familiar with higher education standard didactics. Nevertheless, the Head of Faculty coaches new faculty members on a one-to-one basis to familiarise them with SBS's didactical approach; he also offers individual coaching sessions to further improve teaching. New faculty members have access to videos via ilearn.sbs.edu, which helps them understand SBS's andragogic teaching approach.

Yearly, some faculty members attend the International Management Teachers Academy of CEEMAN in Slovenia. Similarly, Programme Managers are sent to CEEMAN for their Programme Management training.

The faculty participate in the FAB meetings, where quality assurance and enhancement topics are discussed. Faculty and administrative staff may also take advantage of the iLearn portal which provides multiple resources, as well as profiting from the SBS employee scholarships.

Part-time, adjunct faculty do not tend to have a vertical academic career path such as lecturer, assistant professor, professor. However, there are still career opportunities, for example, in achieving higher qualification in order to teach at a higher level.

SBS supports its faculty members to participate in research and strongly encourages early career researchers to develop appropriate interests and abilities. (See also 3.2).

Analysis

In relation to the embedding of and support for part-time staff, it was confirmed to the review panel that videos on teaching are provided and that part-time staff have an equal right to attend conferences and seminars for training and development purposes. Faculty confirmed that they were encouraged to do this and that the found such events very beneficial. As previously stated, faculty also find the informal classroom visits by the Academic Dean supportive and constructive. In general, faculty that spoke to the review panel were of the opinion that they are well-supported by SBS in terms of development opportunities and that they could propose such activities without problem.

Research activities are guided and monitored by the RAB (discussed in 3.2). Faculty members are also encouraged to carry out research, which has a positive impact on their teaching quality as well as on their professional academic careers. Faculty told the review panel that they are helped to shape their academic research agenda for each 2-3 year period. A spreadsheet is used to log everyone's research, and this is helpful in getting an overview of the kind of research projects that are currently ongoing which contributes to cross-sectoral collaboration.

Support staff are also encouraged to attend relevant training and conferences, such as international Quality Assurance conferences.

The review panel concluded that opportunities for development are available at all levels of the School and that staff and faculty avail themselves of these opportunities.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 4.3 as entirely fulfilled.

Area 5: Internal and external communication

> Standard 5.1: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall make public its quality assurance strategy and ensure that the provisions corresponding to quality assurance processes and their results are known to employees, students and if necessary external stakeholders.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that the key document for internal and external communication is the SBS Strategic Communication Plan which, "…describes the fundamental principles of communication, policy, communication goals, communication channels with different stakeholder groups, and the institutional KPIs' publication". Communication of quality assurance is also covered in this document.

In order to clarify the strategic principles for communication, the SAR directly quotes from the Fundamental Principles of SBS Communication: "SBS Swiss Business school aims to publish information in a timely manner that is accurate, fair, reasonable; to ensure that internal and external audiences gain access to reliable information about the Business school and that external audiences can form an accurate impression of the Institution." The policy has been developed in cognisance of the requirements of the Swiss Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration.

The SBS website is deemed to be a key source of information about the quality assurance strategy, its processes, and results for external and internal stakeholders. This section of the website covers governance, accreditation, and accountability. Starting with the SBS Mission and Vision, it covers the SBS Governance Structure and Organization Structure and the SBS Quality Education Principles. The external Accreditation Bodies are also listed.

The SBS website also provides external audiences with a series of reports related to external reviews and student performance such as:

- Public Disclosure of Student Achievement on an annual basis since 2012-2013.

- Accreditation audit reports such as the British Accreditation Council (link) and the IACBE

  reports since 2011.

- The list of SBS programs accredited by ACBSP

LinkedIn and Facebook are currently used as Social Media platforms; through these programmes and events are promoted and news about publications is shared. Alumni have their own LinkedIn Group that cannot be entered without clearance by the group's moderator.

Internally a key source of information about the quality assurance strategy, its processes, and internal stakeholder results is the iLearn Portal. Faculty and students will find handbooks, regulations, supporting documents, course outlines, meeting minutes, results, etc. in this location. SharePoint and MS-Teams are used for staff to communicate and collaborate about quality assurance projects and results.

Regular meetings of the FAB, RAB, SC and other institutional committees and teams provide opportunities for communication, sharing, and active participation. Minutes and reports linked to the activities constitute another source of information.

The SAR states that published information is checked through the quality assurance processes and that surveys for faculty and students address this topic. As SBS is a small organisation, the School believes that feedback is generally straightforward. Students and faculty address their daily concerns to the programme managers and immediate improvements are made accordingly. The integrity of published information is checked at least once a year. External auditors also check the accuracy of internal and external information.

Analysis

The review panel was able to confirm that information on quality assurance is available on the SBS website, although not specifically its quality management strategy. Support staff told the panel that, in addition to the website, communication is targeted at local high and boarding schools, especially for the BBA programmes as there are many international students already in Switzerland who want to continue their education there.

The review panel was told that target group orientation was achieved using Google Analytics and social media channels as well as, for example, the young researchers' group on LinkedIn. SBS also offers free webinars which provides marketing for SBS and value for prospective students. Each programme creates techniques for its effective marketing in both Switzerland and internationally. SBS uses KPIs for this and aims to increase recruitment through these means by 5% each year.

The review panel was also told that SBS works closely with its alumni who can provide student experience stories which are incorporated in the prospectus. Alumni may also act as ambassadors in their home countries and can talk to potential students.

Support staff work closely with the programme leaders to ensure that information is timely and accurate. In terms of information on quality assurance, the review panel was told that research has shown that ranking is not the top reason for a student to choose to apply to SBS.

Support staff also regularly check that students to ensure that they have the information that they need.

The BBA and MSc programme manager is responsible for the whole website and ensures that it is accurate by receiving information from Heads of Function regarding updates. Programme Managers update iLearn and audits are carried out once a year. Chairs of Boards are responsible for ensuring that Board members get the specific information they need. The institutional dashboards are another source of ready information.

In terms of improvements, the review panel was told that marketing activities could further reinforce the diversity of SBS and could make more use of alumni. Support staff also pointed out that, in a digitalised world, it is important for people to have access to services very quickly and improvement of the digitalisation services is in the current action plan. Work is beginning in the Registry and should ensure that students have easier access to various pieces of information as well as providing a means for requests and submission of documentation thus avoiding the need for email exchange.

In conclusion, apart from the lack of the quality management strategy, the review panel saw evidence that SBS's website provides access to information regarding quality assurance and that the information is accurate.

Conclusion

SBS does not publish its quality management strategy and therefore does not fully align with standard 5.1.

The expert group assesses standard 5.1 as **largely** fulfilled.

Standard 5.2: The higher education institution or other institution within the higher education sector shall regularly publish objective information about its activities, its study programmes and the qualifications awarded.

Description and analysis

Description

The SAR states that the SBS website (www.sbs.edu) is the main communication channel for SBS to publish objective information about its activities, study programs, and qualifications for external and internal stakeholders. Printed brochures complement the virtual information listed on the website and are mainly used in student fairs or similar events.

Programmes are described on the SBS website, and a link for the download of brochures about specific programmes is provided. The information contains detail about the course curriculum, admissions, tuition fees, and FAQs. Also, for each programme, ECTS, EQF level, the qualification awarded, admission requirements, tuition costs, etc. are communicated.

Printed brochures are also available.

SBS Swiss Business School releases its research and project-related activities through a mix of print and electronic media. SBS publications include books, chapters in edited volumes, articles in peer- reviewed journals, policy briefs, and working papers. SBS Research Centre provides information about research activities.

Other current activities are posted via News section of the website and through the link to Upcoming Events and Webinars. Information about guest speakers presenting at SBS can be found via the Guest Speakers link.

In addition to the SBS website, SBS makes use of LinkedIn (link) and Facebook to communicate activities. SBS has a LinkedIn Group for Alumni.

Analysis

The review panel was able to confirm the detailed information about SBS programmes that is published on the website. It also noted that SBS has KPIs for external communication and, through tracking these, knows that its goals in this regard are met.

The review panel was informed that an external audit of the website audit took place in May 2020. Its goals were to evaluate SBS information transparency in its official website, identify possible misleading or missing information, and submit short and mid-term solutions or recommendations. The audit has helped the School to improve the website with detailed recommendations covering web pages for Governance, Quality of Education, Sustainability, Research, and Academic Partnerships in terms of making to them more detailed with content accessible to all. These recommendations were taken into consideration and adjusted in summer/autumn 2020. Initial feedback from administrative staff, students and faculty has been positive.

Printed brochures are updated regularly to ensure accuracy. However, SBS believes that this practice needs some reflection external audit in October 2020 via a staff focus group highlighted the difficulty of maintaining the accuracy of the printed materials against the regular updates of information.

Conclusion

The expert group assesses standard 5.2 as entirely fulfilled.

5 Outline of the strengths and challenges of the system and its overall assessment

The review panel noted the following strengths of SBS:

- Its small size, which provides a very student-centred and responsive experience for students. This facilitates students' opportunities to be involved at all levels of the School, including changing the curriculum.
- The School's response to COVID, where all academic activities were moved online within a week, faculty were offered training in online tools and no hours or activities were cut from the students' curricula and programmes.
- The practical focus of the programmes as supported by effective use of adjunct staff and guest lecturers and which is evidenced in the classroom through, for example, the use of live case studies and internships on which a thesis is developed.
- The School's approach to embedding sustainability in its programmes and operations;
- The commitment of staff and faculty and the long-term relationships that they enjoy with SBS.

- The international faculty and student body, which creates a social and academic environment that is much appreciated by students.
- The investment in the development of both full and part-time staff.

The review panel noted the following weaknesses at SBS:

- An overly complicated quality assurance system with an over-abundance of KPIs and handbooks. Rationalisation and simplification is needed in order to ensure that the system provides information that is useful to the School (conditions 1 and 2).
- The need for more formal reporting on the achievement of strategic goals (condition 3).
- A lack of procedure for reporting and mitigating against risk (condition 4).
- The governance structure is not currently sufficiently independent (condition 5).
- The need for a research strategy and for periodic review of research activities (conditions 6 and 7).
- The need to ensure that admissions procedures are revised post-accreditation (condition 8).

6 Recommendations for the future development of quality assurance

Recommendation 1: The panel recommends that SBS clarify the means by which stakeholders are invited to participate on boards and committees (1.3);

Recommendation 2: The panel recommends that all stakeholders receive briefing or information on, specifically, their input into the development and implementation of the quality assurance system (1.3).

Recommendation 3: The review panel recommends that SBS expedites its own actions in this area (i.e. to implement a data management system and to revise the current data collection system to make it more focused, efficient and user friendly) (2.2).

Recommendation 4: The review panel encourages SBS to consider some form of certification for students who are members of the SC, as well as thinking about other appropriate forms of compensation (other than monetary) (2.3).

Recommendation 5: The review panel recommends that SBS ensure that the research strategy is disseminated to all relevant staff (3.1).

Recommendation 6: In order to prepare for the future, SBS should begin to recruit students with one year of experience to demonstrate compliance with the law to the accreditation bodies (3.4).

Recommendation 7: SBS should develop and document a plan through which students are able to finish their studies in any worst-case scenario (4.1).

7 Accreditation proposal of the expert group

Based on the self-assessment report of the SBS Swiss Business School of 21st January 2021 and on the on-site visit that took place from 6th to 7th May 2021, the expert group proposes for the agency to grant the SBS accreditation subject to the following conditions:

Standard 1.1:

Condition 1: SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify

the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement;

Condition 2: SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system.

Standard 1.2:

Condition 3: SBS should embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1).

Condition 4: SBS should develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk.

Standard 2.1:

Condition 5: SBS should carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom.

Standard 2.4:

Condition number 4 in standard 1.2 is relevant to the fulfilment of this standard.

Standard 3.1:

Condition 6: SBS should formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy.

Standard 3.2:

Condition 7: SBS's quality assurance system shall provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see 3.1).

Standard 3.4:

Condition 8: SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law.

The expert group envisages a time horizon of two years for the fulfilment of the conditions; the review is to take place within the framework of a shortened on-site visit (1/2 day) with 2 experts.

Section D

Position statement of SBS Swiss Business School GmbH

5 August 2021

AAQ - Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance
Dr. Christoph Grolimund
Director
Effingerstrasse 15
Postfach
3001 Bern

Kloten, August 5, 2021

External Assessment Report – Response

Dear Dr. Grolimund,

Thank you for the External Assessment Report for the Institutional Accreditation of SBS Swiss Business School GmbH from July 12, 2021.

We, at SBS, would like to express our gratitude to the members of the expert group and the staff members of AAQ for their contributions to the accreditation process.

The experts formulate eight conditions. SBS considers all the conditions as opportunities for improvements to strengthen its quality assurance system.

Condition 1 (regarding standard 1.1):
"SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to simplify the system and its components so that the outcomes from the quality management processes provide the results required by the quality assurance strategy and these facilitate institutional oversight of quality assurance and improvement."

This condition is in line with several topics listed in the action plan (Section 1 and 2) of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of SBS and will be implemented as requested.

Condition 2 (regarding standard 1.1):
"SBS carries out a root and branch review of its quality assurance system to ensure the rationalisation of the current proliferation of Handbooks, KPIs and processes, and to ensure a clear role for each with a view to their integration into the overall system."

This aligns with the action plan (Topics 2.2) in the SAR of SBS, and the condition will be put into action.

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Condition 3 (regarding standard 1.2):
"SBS should embed its system of KPIs/institutional dashboard/Cockpit to ensure that they support a more formal monitoring of the School's strategic goals. The KPIs and the cockpit should be appropriate to the size and structure of the institution (see also 1.1)."

This is in line with the action plan (Topics 2.2) listed in the SAR of SBS, and the condition will be implemented.

Condition 4 (regarding standard 1.2):
"SBS should develop a risk register with mechanisms for reporting on and mitigating against risk."

SBS submitted the following document as an attachment to the SAR: "75 SBS Worst Case Scenario – Finances" and "76 Succession Plan". These cover the most critical elements for the risk management of the institution. SBS will build on the existing documents and create a risk register.

Condition 5 (regarding standard 2.1):
"SBS should carry out an audit of its governance structure to ensure that it respects the rules for the governance of a knowledge driven institution in terms of its independence as an institution and the independence of its staff, students and committee members to adhere to the principle of academic freedom."

Academic freedom is a key element of the SBS culture for the listed stakeholder groups. It is reflected in internal regulations and daily action. Nevertheless, will SBS improve its governance in line with the stated condition.

Condition 6 (regarding standard 3.1)
"SBS should formalise a research strategy that ensures that faculty is carrying out research according to the themes defined in the strategy."

SBS values highly that its faculty is active in research based on the current research strategy. Aligning the academic freedom of each faculty member with an institutional research strategy is a challenge. SBS accepts the challenge to improve the alignment.

Condition 7 (regarding standard 3.2):
"SBS's quality assurance system shall provide for the periodic evaluation of research, including the research strategy (see 3.1)."

SBS will improve on the periodic evaluation of the research and the research strategy.

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Condition 8 (regarding standard 3.4):
"SBS must demonstrate that admissions regulations are in accordance with the law."

SBS will demonstrate as requested.

SBS considers the proposed period of 24 months for the fulfillment of the conditions to be reasonable.

We appreciate that SBS Swiss Business School is regarded as an enrichment towards the Swiss educational system.

With best regards,

Bert Wolfs, PhD

Marijana Karanfiloska

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