

programme

criteria

accreditation

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**CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION
OF MASTERS IN BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT
MBM PROGRAMMES**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the criteria for the accreditation of Masters programmes in Business and Management (MBM). This document outlines clearly the criteria upon which assessors will base accreditation recommendations. While setting the norms, which accredited provision will be expected to meet, these criteria are not intended to be so prescriptive as to stifle innovation or to preclude other measures by which quality may be assessed.
- 1.2 At the core of the accreditation scheme is full recognition of the autonomy of individual degree awarding institutions to offer these programmes and of the need for individuals and employers to have an internationally recognised accreditation process based on external and peer review of the provision.
- 1.3 Assessors will base their judgement on the overall context of the provision under assessment, taking into account the quality of the institution.
- 1.4 An accredited MBA portfolio is normally a pre-requisite for the assessment of an institution's pre-experience Masters in general management portfolio; however, if an institution does not offer an MBA, then the MBM assessment may be permitted.
- 1.5 An institution can choose the MBM programmes that it wishes to put forward for assessment. In the interest of stakeholder clarity, any programmes that bear the same nomenclature, but are delivered differently, must meet accreditation standards as one programme. Close attention will be paid to the programmes submitted to ensure that the accredited portfolio is clear to all stakeholders. Partner institutions with unaccredited provision will be expected to apply for accreditation within the current review cycle of the multi-centre programme.
- 1.6 Programmes that are 'franchised' to another institution or institutions come within the portfolio and will require separate assessment. This should be sought jointly by the institutions involved. The franchising institution will need to provide evidence that the quality of the franchised programme meets the accreditation criteria. There should be clear evidence that the franchiser is regularly monitoring the performance of the franchisee. The term 'franchise' is used to include any contractual agreement whereby a significant proportion of the teaching delivery and/or assessment of a particular school's programme is carried out by one or more other institutions.
- 1.7 Where an institution offers the designation for a programme that is recognisably functional, or specialist in nature, the institution is expected to provide an explicit rationale for the designation.

2 THE INSTITUTION

- 2.1 The assessment of MBM provision will take account of the institution offering the programmes. The institution will have:
 - (i) an appropriate mission, explicitly expressed and regularly reviewed;

- (ii) a well-defined, credible and coherent strategy, realistically reflecting its resources and constraints;
- (iii) well defined and implemented policies of governance and continuous improvement, with members of the corporate community participating in the development of these policies;
- (iv) secured financial viability and institutional continuity;
- (v) a discrete identity and have an appropriate degree of autonomy (e.g. from the wider University) for decision making on issues such as strategic development and resourcing with respect to educational provision and management of educational resources;
- (vi) an effective and integrated organisation for the management of activities, with a significant degree of autonomy and control over its future;
- (vii) identified its target population and have a developed sense of the market for its products including means of regular access to employer opinion;
- (viii) a clearly articulated policy with regards to its relations with the organisational and managerial world; and,
- (ix) a well-developed customer orientation, particularly in respect of relations with corporate clients.

- 2.2 The institution offering an accredited programme must be able to provide relevant evidence of the quality of teaching on the programme from within its faculty.
- 2.3 The institution should be able to demonstrate high levels of quality in the programme teaching team as evidenced by relevant management research, scholarship and consultancy. The majority of the teaching team should be actively involved in all three activities.
- 2.4 The institution should be able to demonstrate satisfactory outcomes from its own internal and national audit processes. The institution should provide evidence that it has responded successfully to any recommendations resulting from these processes.
- 2.5 Mechanisms must exist to ensure adequate feedback and response to student reactions to course delivery and content.
- 2.6 There shall be clearly defined roles relating to the academic leadership and administrative responsibilities for the programme with individuals identified for each.
- 2.7 The institution should be able to demonstrate a level and quality of administrative support appropriate to the size of the MBM provision.
- 2.8 Institutions should demonstrate that the level of overall resourcing is appropriate for postgraduate/post-experience students. Library, computing and research facilities must be of a high standard and should be accessible, at least electronically, out of normal working hours and at weekends. Access to industry-standard hardware and software is important, as is the availability of business databases and literature search facilities.
- 2.9 Facilities should exist to assist in employment for full-time

students at the conclusion of their studies.

- 2.10 Mechanisms must be in place to ensure that students, especially international students, receive adequate pastoral care and support throughout their course of study.
- 2.11 A well-established and active association of alumni is expected.

3 FACULTY

- 3.1 Faculty teaching at Masters level must be appropriately qualified and credible. At least 75% of the teaching staff should have a relevant postgraduate degree. It is expected that the majority of faculty will hold a Doctorate.
- 3.2 The faculty team should:
- (i) be aware of debates at the forefront of knowledge in the relevant management field;
 - (ii) be able to relate their subject to other subjects in the programme;
 - (iii) have an up-to-date understanding of business practice gained through, for example, recent managerial experience, consultancy or executive education so that teaching can be linked to good practice as well as theory.
- 3.3 Research quality should be of a high quality in all areas of activity and show some evidence of an international dimension.
- 3.4 The institution should be able to demonstrate that there are effective mechanisms by which results from research, consultancy and contact with the organisational corporate world are incorporated into the entire MBM provision.
- 3.5 The institution should have a well-founded faculty development policy to ensure that faculty continue to meet high standards.
- 3.6 The teaching faculty should be of a size, which can, with regard to the overall supervision and number of participants, fully resource the provision for which accreditation is being sought. Due regard will be given to the following factors:
- (i) the need for a critical mass of core staff to administer, deliver and manage the programme effectively;
 - (ii) new innovative approaches to delivery and learning which transcend the traditional concept of the school and tutor/student interaction.
- 3.7 The institution should address the issues of collegiality, availability and integration of staff into the total teaching and learning environment of the school, including part-time faculty, faculty from another part of the institution, staff from other institutions and practitioners. All members of the teaching team, irrespective of origin, should be subject to the institution's quality assurance policy.

4 STUDENTS

- 4.1 Masters programmes in business and management, which can be based on any discipline first degree, are designed to develop Masters level knowledge, understanding and skills in business and management.
- 4.2 There should be an expectation on the part of the provider that the student will be able to fulfil the objectives of the programme and achieve the standard required for the award. Evidence will be required to show rigour in procedures and standards for admission within the institution's national framework.
- 4.3 The MBM can be aimed at graduates from any discipline, and any such admissions requirements must be made clear to all applicants in the admissions procedures.
- 4.4 It is not necessary to require prior work experience for accredited MBM programmes, and any such admissions requirements must be made clear to all applicants in the admissions procedures, as well as having a clear rationale with regards to the pedagogy of the programme.
- 4.5 Evidence of language proficiency will be required. Where teaching is in English, evaluation of students for whom English is not a first language by IELTS, TOEFL or interview will be expected.
- 4.6 In order to maintain cohesion and integrity of the student cohort and the programme, admission with credit, admission with advanced standing and exemptions would not be accepted for accredited programmes.
- 4.7 In order to achieve adequate group interaction, it is expected that the minimum intake on an accredited programme would be a cohort size of at least 20.
- 4.8 Single Company and Consortia programmes may be accredited provided that final decisions on admissions, student progress, curriculum, assessment and award of the degree remain under the control of the institution.

5 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

- 5.1 The MBM should enhance a graduate's career in business and management by developing skills at a professional level; or to prepare graduates for research or further study in business and management.
- 5.2 The purpose of the programme of study is to:
- (i) develop knowledge, at an advanced level, of organisations, their management and the environment in which they operate;
 - (ii) develop a graduate's ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of business and management to complex issues both systematically and creatively, to improve business and management practice; and,
 - (iii) encourage lifelong learning and personal development.

- 5.3 Each individual programme should have clearly stated aims, objectives and learning outcomes. Learning outcomes should be clear and explicit in describing what participants are expected to know and be able to do as a result of the programme. They should make clear the ways in which the institution recognises and assesses intellectual, analytical, personal and enterprise qualities as well as the specific knowledge being developed by the programme.
- 5.4 The aims, objectives and learning outcomes should be designed to address the particular needs of the student cohort, especially with regards to the range of previous degree disciplines and / or level of prior work experience, as stipulated in the programme admission requirements.
- 5.5 In terms of knowledge and understanding, it is expected that a Masters in Business and Management graduate will be able to:
- (i) draw on generic knowledge and skills from their first degree and understand how it can be used effectively in an organisational context;
 - (ii) demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding of organisations, the external context in which they operate and how they are managed; and,
 - (iii) integrate their learning from a range of subject areas to form a holistic understanding of business.
- 5.6 Employers can expect graduates, over time, to:
- (i) apply their knowledge and intellectual skills consistently in a business context;
 - (ii) deal with complex issues systematically and creatively;
 - (iii) make sound judgements with incomplete data and communicate conclusions clearly to a range of audiences;
 - (iv) be proactive in recognising the need for change and be able to manage that change;
 - (v) be adaptable and demonstrate originality, insight and critical reflection in problem situations;
 - (vi) make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations;
 - (vii) evaluate and integrate theory and practice;
 - (viii) operate effectively in a variety of team roles, taking the lead where appropriate;
 - (ix) be self-directed and able to act autonomously in planning and implementing projects; and,
 - (x) take responsibility for continuing to develop their knowledge and skills.
- 5.7 When assessing the overall quality of the programme, consideration will be given to the value added by the programme to career entry and development. The views and experiences of appropriate alumni, employers and sponsors will also be sought. The transfer of learning from

6 CURRICULUM

- 6.1 An MBM is a Masters-level programme of study and is postgraduate in nature. Institutions should be able to demonstrate that Masters-level learning is achieved across the programme.

Nature and Design

- 6.2 An MBM is designed to enhance individual's management career in order to make an early and significant contribution to the employer. It should offer a rigorous understanding of business and management in the organisational context.
- 6.3 The design and approach of the programme should, if applicable, reflect the nature of students who may not have completed a first degree in business and management, and who may not have any practical managerial experience.
- 6.4 The design and content of the programme should embrace a range of relevant theory firmly linked to the practical world of management; employing organisations should contribute to the development of the course.
- 6.5 While all programmes should reflect the general character of the Masters degree in general management, individual courses may be designed to meet the needs of a specific functional sector.
- 6.6 Although a programme may allow some specialisation appropriate to the providing institution's resources and strengths, the programme should retain its generalist, broad character.

Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

- 6.7 The MBM is a postgraduate general management degree. Care should be taken to ensure that the academic programme is properly related to the practical world of management.
- 6.8 The programme of study should encompass relevant knowledge and understanding of organisations, the external context in which they operate and how they are managed. All programmes should ensure that candidates acquire a firm theoretical understanding of the major areas of knowledge which underpin general management, including:
- (i) the concepts, processes and institutions in the production and marketing of goods and/or services and the financing of business enterprise or other forms of organisation;
 - (ii) the concepts and applications of accounting, of quantitative methods, and management information systems including IT applications;
 - (iii) organisation theory, behaviour, HRM issues and interpersonal communications;
 - (iv) the processes and problems of general management at the operational and strategic level;
 - (v) business research methods and consultancy skills;

- (vi) the impact of environmental forces on organisations, including: legal systems; ethical, social, economic, and technological change issues;
- (vii) the ability to respond to and manage change should be covered explicitly;
- (viii) business policy and strategy;
- (ix) leadership and entrepreneurship;
- (x) contemporary and pervasive issues, such as creativity, enterprise, innovation, e-commerce, knowledge management, globalisation and sustainability;
- (xi) the international dimension to the above, including political risk and contemporary processes of regionalisation, emerging markets, global governance and globalisation.

6.9 The programme of study should contain substantial evidence of individual work undertaken as a project or projects, providing evidence of ability to integrate the individual core subjects. A project should be practically based and allow candidates to demonstrate an understanding of theory and its application at Masters level. Research and consultancy skills training should be provided in preparation for the above.

6.10 Where the courses are specified in terms of competencies, institutions must be careful to give due weight to and assess intellectual development; the coverage of underlying theory and concepts; and the development of understanding at Masters level.

6.11 The general educational aims of the programme should be to develop cognitive, intellectual and transferable intellectual skills at Masters level. It is important that participants are able to apply the concepts learned during the programme at the co-operative and team level as compared to the leadership level of the MBA.

Delivery and Assessment

6.12 The applied nature of parts of the degree demands a range of teaching and learning methods. These methods include lectures, seminars, workshops, action learning, reading, individual and group projects, distance learning, computer-based training, and in-company training whether formal courses or in-company learning with a mentor. Co-operation of employers is to be encouraged and it is expected that some of the learning will be practically based.

6.13 Some of the learning can be expected to take place between members of the learning group, and opportunities for this to occur should be provided.

6.14 The key purpose of student assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have met the objectives and achieved the learning outcomes of the programme at the standard required for the award of the degree. The assessment scheme should have detailed criteria and specify the range and relative values of the various assessment methods used. The assessment scheme should be comprehensive and consistent.

6.15 The assessment scheme should reflect the particular aims and characteristics of the course. Individual examinations should play a significant role in any such scheme since they are seen as testing intellectual rigour under controlled conditions and may be required for course continuation. While innovation in assessment methods is welcomed, particularly where new teaching and learning methods are being used, detailed evaluation by the school of such innovations will also be looked for.

6.16 Assessment should also be used to provide feedback to students and assist in subsequent individual and group learning.

6.17 Evidence is required that steps are taken to ensure that the individual's own work is being considered, and that assessment standards are consistent.

7 MODE AND DURATION

7.1 Programmes may be full-time, part-time, distance/open learning or multi-mode. Innovative approaches to design and delivery are welcomed if they enhance learning opportunities and can maintain the coherence and integrity of the course.

7.2 Where programmes are designed on a modular basis, the design should, given the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to management problems, clearly provide means by which the integration of individual subjects is achieved.

7.3 Distance/open learning programmes will be assessed using the guidelines set out in the document 'Open and Distance Learning: Additional Principles for Accreditation Standards'.

7.4 The duration of the programme is expected to be equivalent to at least one year's full-time study and at least two year's part-time study.

7.5 A programme will correspond to the equivalent of at least 1 800 hours learning effort. There should be a justifiable level of student-faculty face-to-face contact time sufficient to ensure Masters level learning, and to fulfil the aims and learning outcomes of the programme. The total number of contact hours is expected to be not less than 300 hours.