

**University College for Applied
Computer Engineering – Zagreb
Institutional Audit**

22 December 2010

Institutional Audit Report

Pilot Project Croatia – Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Status of the Audit Report

This report is the outcome of the international pilot project "Quality assessment and enhancement in higher education institutes of professional education in Croatia" of the Flemish Government executed by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) in collaboration with Croatian partners. The aims of this project are twofold:

- enhancement of internal quality assurance systems in Croatian Universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences;
- preparation for the external reviews as planned by the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE).

In accordance with these aims NVAO has organised three institutional audits of the QA systems on institutional level, using its framework and procedures as aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). This report is the outcome and result of an investigation and site visit by an international panel of experts coordinated by NVAO. The report focuses on recommendations for further actions enabling the institution to manage, maintain and enhance its quality assurance system taking in consideration the Croatian and institutional contexts. Due to the project's aims, its pilot character and the legal competences of the NVAO, the board has decided to take notice of this report and the panel's recommendations, but not to extend it into a formal decision on its assessments.

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

Panel Report

Country	Croatia
Location	Zagreb
Institution	University College for Applied Computer Engineering
Type	Private institution for professional higher education
Application	6 September 2010
Site visit	18 and 19 October 2010
Panel report	22 December 2010

Institution (main representatives)

- Mislav Balković, MSc, dean and president of Professional Council (*coordinator audit*);
- Hrvoje Balen, BSc, president of Managing Board;
- Tomislav Dominković, BSc, member of Managing Board;
- Prof. Žarko Nožica, PhD, member of Managing Board;
- Silvija Jurak, BSc, dean assistant and president of Committee for Quality;
- Prof. Mario Kovač, PhD, full professor in Computer architecture and multimedia technologies, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb, and president of Economic Committee;
- Tomislav Kelemen, student of System Engineering and member of Professional Council.

Audit panel

- Prof. Harry Martens, PhD, emeritus professor of Chemistry, Hasselt University, Belgium (*chair*);
- Prof. Ferdo Bašić, PhD, emeritus professor of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb;
- Šime Višić, student of Informatics and board member of the Student Council, University of Zagreb, and former board member of the Croatian Student Council and the European Student Union;
- Prof. Nevenka Breslauer, PhD, college professor in Kinesiology and dean of the Međimurje University of Applied Sciences, Čakovec (*Zagreb audit*);
- Prof. Dražan Kozak, PhD, full professor in Mechanics and Strength of Materials, and dean of the Mechanical Engineering Faculty, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (*Knin audit*);
- Prof. Zdravko Krakar, PhD, full professor in IT Management, Faculty of Organization and Informatics, Varazdin, University of Zagreb (*Slavonski Brod audit*).

Observer

- Vesna Dodiković-Jurković, PhD, head of the Directorate for Quality Assurance, Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), Zagreb.

Assisting staff members (NVAO Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders)

- Niek Pronk, MBA, policy advisor and project coordinator;
- Michèle Wera, MA, policy advisor and secretary.

SUMMARY

A panel of peers conducted an institutional audit of the University College for Applied Computer Engineering (the college) in Zagreb, Croatia. Judgements were made about the NVAO standards for institutional audits of Croatian institutions for professional higher education. Overall, the college's internal quality system is considered **satisfactory**.

From the start, the ultimate aim of the college was to create an attractive high-quality bachelor's programme in IT with the help of industry. Three years later, it seems that precisely these high-quality aims at programme level have brought about a high-quality system and culture at institutional level. Management, staff, students and cooperating partners in industry and higher education, they all seem to share the same quality values and goals. Together, they certainly succeed in creating a stimulating and dynamic teaching and learning environment attractive to students and staff alike.

Three years later, the college is also found to be in a phase where challenges and opportunities are coming together. Indeed, the college's financial resources encompass primarily tuition fees making its stability rather fragile. Economic setbacks and financial constraints also cause delays in the implementation of new programmes and the further internationalisation of activities. And pending reforms in Croatian higher education call for ingenuity and resourcefulness. But despite its short existence, the college can rely with full confidence on its excellent reputation, a promising relationship with industry and FER (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb), and a quality system fit for purpose. Management is determined to extend its national and international cooperation, and to invest in new partnerships with industry and higher education institutions in order to continue delivering first-rate education.

Strengths

- Quality of the programme(s) now and in the future is the top priority of the management resulting in a robust and efficient internal quality system.
- Quality procedures are adequate to develop new programmes, and to ensure the quality of these future programmes.
- The college aims to attract the best students and highly-qualified staff, and is well on its way in creating the ideal classroom situation.
- Stakeholders are highly-motivated, and participate actively in a quality culture supported by the management.
- Staff are well aware of the need to upgrade their academic education to the doctorate level.
- Good use is made of the partnership with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb.
- The college benefits from its impressive network of international and national IT companies.
- As founder of the college, the Algebra Group provides the ideal professional experience in high-quality and specialized IT education.
- A system of loans and scholarships is part of the strategy to recruit the best students.
- Facilities and services for disabled students are in place including special scholarships.
- The college boasts an excellent infrastructure including state-of-the-art computer rooms and advanced e-learning facilities.
- Management is well aware of challenges and opportunities due to economic and financial setbacks, and acts accordingly.
- The self-assessment document is a very informative and useful guide explicating the management and development of quality strategies and implementations.

Weaknesses

- Policies, strategies, procedures and rules are not clearly delineated.
- Policy documents per interest area containing statements of intentions and principal means by which they will be achieved are still missing mainly due to the recent start of the college.
- In the long run, over regulation might undermine the college's flexibility and dynamics.
- The college's financial resources encompass primarily tuition fees making its stability rather fragile.
- The quality system and its organisational structure are adequate for a small-scale institution but might need slight adaptations to cater for more programmes and more complicated decision-making processes.

Good practice

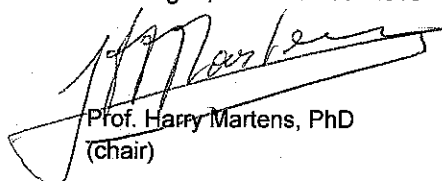
- The college sets a good standard for an internal quality system, for institutions for professional higher education in general and for the private sector in particular.
- The vision on quality maintenance and enhancement is well-defined, ambitious yet realistic, especially considering the early stage of development.
- Management and staff are fully committed to the college's quality aims and objectives. They operate as a dynamic team of professionals sharing the same quality values and defining the college's quality culture.
- The college is successful in involving major IT businesses, both national and international, in all quality matters and at all levels of the educational process.
- The dean's office is capable of establishing a certain degree of trust in which creative energy is directed towards quality enhancement.
- The management is well aware of the importance of a good functioning quality system resulting in various external assessment procedures carried out by national and international agencies.

Recommendations

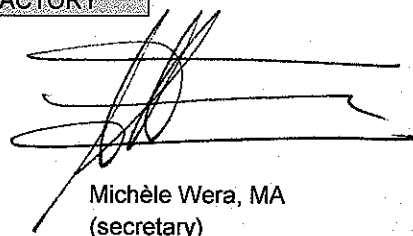
- The college should strive to a more balanced focus on external quality assurance for evaluation purposes on the one hand, and internal quality assurance for maintenance and enhancement purposes on the other.
- The college is encouraged to use more explicitly the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as leading principle in all quality matters.
- The college should differentiate more clearly between long-term and mid-term goals on the one hand, and short-term action plans on the other.
- In time, the college might want to consider developing separate policy documents per interest area making use of standard formats, and making a clear distinction between policies and procedures. In general, the college is encouraged to simplify its procedures, and limit the number of rules and regulations. In doing so also the paperwork can be reduced.
- The introduction of a quality improvement plan alongside the quality action plan per interest area might be considered in due time.
- The institutional network needs to be extended more deliberately towards other institutions for professional higher education to the benefit of both the individual institutions and Croatian professional education at large.
- Internationalisation needs to be a priority as it is conducive to enhancing the overall quality of the teaching and learning opportunities, also at the bachelor's level.
- The college should engage in international benchmarking to safeguard its unique position in professional IT education.
- The college should certainly continue investing in its staff active in quality assurance, and extend these training facilities to students.
- A complete set of documents (also in English) regarding the quality system and its various (sub)committees needs to be easily accessible on the college's website. Especially students should be able to find all necessary information on student's involvement without too much effort.

Assessment

STANDARD	ASSESSMENT
1 Vision	satisfactory
2 Policy	satisfactory
3 Results	satisfactory
4 Improvement policy	satisfactory
5 Organisation and decision-making structure	satisfactory
GENERAL CONCLUSION	SATISFACTORY

The Hague, 22 December 2010¹


Prof. Harry Martens, PhD
(Chair)



Michèle Wera, MA
(secretary)

¹ All the institution's comments on the draft report of 9 December 2010 were incorporated in this final version.

AUDIT PROCESS

The University College for Applied Computer Engineering in Zagreb underwent an institutional audit mid October 2010 as part of a pilot project coordinated by NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) and financed by the Flemish Government. Two other Croatian institutions for higher education participated in the project: the University of Applied Sciences of Slavonski Brod and the University of Applied Sciences "Marko Marulic" in Knin. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the institutions' internal quality system, and to contribute to the further development of institutional strategies for maintaining and enhancing the quality of their programmes.

The audit starts with the application of the higher education institution providing NVAO with a self-evaluation document (SED). This document is submitted to a panel of peers, including a student member, carrying out the audit according to the NVAO procedures and standards. During a two-day site visit the panel meets with management, staff, students and professional field, reads relevant documents, and visits premises and placement locations. The panel also makes use of a limited number of audit trails to provide more specific evidence. After completion of the audit the panel passes judgement on all standards resulting in an overall assessment. Scores used are satisfactory, partially satisfactory and unsatisfactory (standards), and satisfactory, conditionally satisfactory and unsatisfactory (overall assessment).

The panel reports the outcomes of the audit to NVAO describing the institution's strengths, weaknesses, and features on good practice. The report focuses on recommendations for further actions enabling the institution to manage, maintain and enhance the quality of its programmes. NVAO takes notice of the outcomes of the audit and the panel's recommendations. No formal decision is taken given the pilot character of the project and the prevailing national legislation.

Full details of the institutional audit process can be found in three documents published by NVAO (June 2010):

- Framework: *NVAO assessment framework for institutional audits of Croatian higher education institutions for professional education;*
- Procedure and guidelines for institutions: *Institutional audits of Croatian higher education institutes for professional education: assessment procedure and guidelines for structuring the institutional self-evaluation report;*
- Procedure and guidelines for panels: *External quality assurance of higher education institutes by NVAO with an audit panel appointed and assisted by NVAO.*

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The SED was very informative and useful explicating the management and development of quality strategies and implementations. Standards and criteria are well documented in a concise report. Appendixes are relevant and limited. Additional information and further evidence made available during the audit completed the picture.

The SED was a collaborative effort of the management team. It managed to produce an accurate analysis in a well structured, pleasantly readable and easy accessible document even though the SED did not always correspond with the NVAO framework. All stakeholders both internal and external made contributions, and were actively involved in finalising the report. An abstract of the report is published on the college's website.

Meetings of the panel with various parties concerned were very conducive to a more in-depth understanding of the college's aims and ambitions on quality and the quality system at large. The openness, enthusiasm and drive of the energetic management team were much appreciated.

Three audit trails were defined covering (1) student surveys, (2) the programme's accreditation process by the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (FER) of the University of Zagreb, and (3) the development of a new master's programme. The presentations were very instructive and helpful for better insight into some quality procedures now and in the future.

INSTITUTION UNDER REVIEW

The University College for Applied Computer Engineering was founded in July 2008 as a non-profit private college for professional higher education by Algebra Ltd, an IT adult educational institution active for more than 12 years in 20 locations in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At present, the college offers one three-year professional bachelor programme in Applied Computer Engineering (180 ECTS) with two majors: System Engineering and Software Engineering. The first generation of students started in October 2008. The total enrolment of students in 2009-2010 is 123, 73 in year one and 50 in year two. There are 30 staff members including 7 full-time lecturers. A new master programme in IT is being developed. After a successful initial accreditation procedure in 2008, the bachelor programme received a permanent accreditation in July 2010 by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MOSES). It will also be assessed on a regular basis by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), for the first time in September -October 2011.

The college's funds come from tuition fees, development and research projects, and financial support from the Algebra group. The average annual fee in 2009/2010 was 25.500 kn (ca. € 3.500). Loans and a number of scholarships for students are available.

Standard 1 – Vision

The institution has a broad vision of the quality of the education it provides and of the development of a quality culture.

The college has a well-defined vision aiming 'to become the first choice for Croatian and regional students interested in professional higher educational programmes in the field of computing and ICT, through the development of excellence in all aspects of the institution's work, its infrastructure, staff, cooperation with industry and international activities' (SED, p.6). Offering high quality professional education in a niche subject using excellent services is clearly the top priority.

Wanting to be first choice in IT education is certainly a very ambitious objective for such a young institution. As a private provider of higher education, the college realizes it has to offer value for money in order to survive. Tuition fees are high, and so are the students' expectations. Wanting to attract the best students is ambitious in itself; wanting to be their first choice is even more ambitious. And yet, these rather bold aspirations are not considered unrealistic given the outcomes of market surveys (SED, p. 1), and the significant importance placed on the quality of the learning opportunities (cf. Standard 2). The college's ambitions also appear to be supported by internal and external stakeholders.

The vision incorporates six specific values in which high quality is the recurrent theme. The college believes in values such as high value for money, a high level of professionalism and specialisation, additional international certificates, and a determination towards quality through external assessments. When translating the vision into strategic goals these values are visibly taken into account.

This vision is described in great detail in terms of six strategic aims including establishing high-level educational processes, investing in human resources, providing high standard facilities, and setting up an internal quality system according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The strategic goals as defined in the *Development Strategy for 2009-2013* (SED, Annex 2; November 2009) are found to be directly in line with the college's vision emphasizing the utmost importance of quality and including all six values. As stated in the strategy document, the leading idea is quality of the college in general and of the programme(s) in particular. As a result, the strategy aims at systematically and permanently monitoring the quality of the college's educational programmes.

Quality is in fact the 'raison d'être' of the college, and this explains its vision on quality: a 'holistic approach and strategic orientation towards ultimate quality' (SED, p. 8). The management explained the quality vision as not only covering the procedures but the entire operation with students and staff at the very centre. The strategy document further elaborates on the quality goals as mentioned before. The vision is found to be unambiguous and well-defined.

Developing its vision on quality and strategic goals, the college made great effort in involving all stakeholders, both national and international, both internal and external. The SED elaborates on the various stages in the process, and lists the main partners in education and business. A first draft of the strategy was written by the Dean and Managing Board in collaboration with the Committee for Strategy. At a later stage, also the Professional Council and Economic Committee were consulted. Even so, the development of a quality vision and culture is essentially the credit of the management team and the dean's office making full use of the stakeholders' input.

As founder of the college, the Algebra Group obviously provides the ideal professional experience in high-quality and specialized IT education. This company has been successful in delivering first-rate adult education in IT for the past 12 years, and has largely determined the college's vision on quality. After all, the college's driven force originates in the Algebra Group.

A crucial partner is the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (FER) of the University of Zagreb. Good use is made of this partnership, and not only in formulating the overall aims and ambitions. In an audit trail the cooperation with FER is looked at in more detail (cf. Standard 3). Here it suffices to state that since the early stages of the project, FER has been very willing to cooperate and to think along the same line as the initiators. Contrary to expectations, FER (as a state university) immediately welcomed the newcomer on the market (as a private institution for professional higher education). FER spokesmen indicate the need for high-quality schools educating talented students open to new ways of solving IT issues. Competition between academic and professional programmes in IT is, therefore, discarded as being pointless. FER is also represented in the Economic Committee.

Meetings with various stakeholders confirmed they all share the college's views on quality. Members of the Economic Committee support the college's aim to offer high-level education in a dynamic first-rate learning and teaching environment. International companies such as Microsoft and Siemens praise the college's genuine concern with quality at all levels. The college is found to be interested in the latest IT developments reacting proactively to the changing needs of employers. The field of IT is extremely energetic, and the college responds favourably to this. It is open to new projects, and creates the right setting for testing new technologies allowing its graduates to achieve the necessary know-how and skills.

Students testified to consider quality as the college's most distinctive feature. They have high expectations, are eager and very motivated having paid quite a considerable tuition fee. Hoping to graduate as highly skilled IT employees, they certainly support the college's approach and strategy driven by quality. Staff obviously also contribute largely to establishing a quality culture. They appear to be ambitious, energetic and quality-minded education professionals in IT. Staff are found to be fully engaged and entirely committed to the college's broad vision on quality. Specific tasks related to quality enhancement are paid for on top of the regular salaries. Both students and staff are represented in the college's various committees contributing to the establishment and maintenance of high-quality professional education in computing and IT.

As acknowledged in the SED, internal and external stakeholders must be fully satisfied with the college's performance if it wants to become Croatia's first choice for professional higher education in IT. Therefore, the college clearly invests in its relationships: staff, students and employers endorse its vision on quality and are part of a strong quality culture. Especially the college's flexibility and openness to communicate, the positive and prompt reaction to the needs and demands in future years, and the absolute focus on quality are much appreciated. It also seems the college finds the right way to address its stakeholders. Or as one employer puts it: 'Yes, they bother us, but it is a good school. And so we take the time necessary to help them in any way we can.'

Assessment Standard 1: Vision – satisfactory

The vision on quality is well-defined, ambitious and realistic, especially considering the early stage of development. The college clearly aspires to provide its students high-quality education, and to improve and enhance the quality of the programme(s) offered. Management and staff are fully committed to the college's quality aims and objectives. They operate as a dynamic team of professionals sharing the same quality values and defining the college's quality culture. Both the vision on quality, and the commitment of management and staff are identified as features of good practice.

As founder of the college, the Algebra Group obviously provides the ideal professional experience in high-quality and specialized IT education. The college also benefits from its partnership with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb, and good use is made of an exceptionally broad network of international and national IT companies.

Standard 2 – Policy

The institution has an appropriate policy for the realisation of its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides. This will at least include: policy regarding teaching, staff, facilities, the anchoring of research in the education provided as well as the inter-relationship between the education provided and the (international) occupational field and the discipline.

The vision on quality is put into practice in a number of specific goals (SED, 3.1.2) taking into account the positioning in respect to the different stakeholders (SED, 3.1.3). Numerous documents support the college's quality aims and objectives: work procedures, several books of regulation, rules of conduct, templates etc. These documents clearly outline a well-structured quality assurance system. The college has a policy to strictly regulate all procedures; at the same time, all regulations also have follow up procedures ensuring proper implementation. It would be helpful, though, to use a consistent terminology in all communication on quality. The translation of documents into English might explain some of the incongruity. Also the ownership of the various documents on quality should be clarified.

Providing students a high-quality study environment is obviously the college's primary concern. Appropriate teaching, student support and assessment need to be in place. From its scrutiny of the various policy papers, documents and procedures, manuals and handbooks, guidelines and templates, and its meetings with management and staff, the panel noticed that – not unexpectedly – particular attention is given to the notion of 'quality'. More than 20 documents containing procedures and rules are available, each of them emphasising the

necessity of delivering quality. They cover issues such as work places, training of teachers, learning outcomes, legal regulations, laboratory equipment, etc.

The college has developed the aforementioned *Development Strategy for 2009-2013*, an *Integral Action Plan* and annual operating plans. Other examples are the guidelines for educational material and assessment procedures. In general, all these documents ensure the quality of teaching and learning opportunities, and cover the provisions enabling students to achieve their degree.

The *Integral Action Plan* is presented as chapter 9 of the strategy document. This probably explains why the action plan is referred to as being 'integrated'. The SED mentions that the plan includes general strategic aims on Quality (Quality Policy), Human resources development (HR Policy), Infrastructural development (Infrastructure Policy) and Cooperation (Cooperation Policy). Research activities are said to be covered within the HR and Cooperation Policy. All issues are certainly touched upon, and listed in the action plan but individual policies as such are not yet available. This approach is completely in line with the holistic and integrated point of view also given the recent start of the college and the limited number of programmes offered. In due time, however, the next logical step would be to bring together all aims and objectives per interest area in separate policy documents.

The annual plans deal with teachers and staff training, research and project activities, and quality control activities. These plans are further elaborated upon in Chapters 8 and 9 of the strategy document in terms of 30 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and 60 tasks. They do not have the characteristics of 'annual' plans, though, since they cover five years being the duration of the strategy document. At the audit meeting, additional documents were presented including the *Document Strategy 2008-2009*.

The panel advises to differentiate more clearly between long-term and mid-term goals, and short-term action plans. Since most ingredients are already present, the transcript of policies into key documents should not be too complicated. Such documents facilitate the processes for approval, monitoring and review in collaboration with all stakeholders concerned. When composing these policy documents good use can be made of a format with standard components distinguishing between policies (aims and objectives) on the one hand, and procedures and rules (implementation) on the other. As the college already has some experience with templates, the suggested method is in line with existing practice.

Overall, the college is encouraged to simplify its procedures, and reduce the number of rules and regulations. And yet: 'overregulated is better than under regulated' (SED, p. 20). People the audit panel talked to at the meetings, in general agree with this statement. Given the short existence of the college, they feel the college rightly invests in regulations and rules. At the same time, it is expected that growing trust in the organisation and increasing importance of informal ways of communication will make the present supply of rulebooks and manuals partly superfluous. In limiting the number of rules and regulations, more attention can be paid to the actual content of the programme(s). Staff confirmed, for example, that defining intended learning outcomes (ILOs) has been an interesting and demanding exercise adding to the overall quality of the courses and the programme at large.

And although procedural guidance for staff was available in the form of a manual, ILOs were primarily the result of discussions and deliberations in informal staff meetings.

The college's policy on cooperation refers to industrial partners and institutions of higher education. The most eminent place is taken up by the Algebra Group. As asserted in the SWOT-analysis, the broad experience and educational success of the college's initiator and founder are its main strengths. FER is the privileged educational partner. This partnership was formalised in 2007, and is solely oriented towards quality maintenance and enhancement (cf. Standard 3). FER is above all an important partner in research as the college still lacks experience in (international) research projects. Even so, the growing research interest is not amongst the opportunities in the SWOT-analysis.

It appears that in Croatia most polytechnics² cooperate quite easily with universities. It would be interesting for the college, though, to extend its institutional network more explicitly towards other polytechnics in Croatia. Of course there are challenges arising from the fact that the college is a private institution with quality as its first priority. Nonetheless, partnership with other Croatian polytechnics can be highly beneficial to all partners concerned. After all, they all were founded a short time ago, and they all dealt with similar problems during the initial stages. But they

² Polytechnics offer professional higher education.

not only suffered but certainly also gained from their fresh start and lack of past burdens. Working together on issues like defining ILOs or mobility of students can be conducive for the individual polytechnic and for professional higher education in Croatia at large.

The college shows a keen interest in partnerships with higher education institutions abroad such as Griffith College Dublin (Ireland) and Hochschule Ostwestfalen-Lippe – University of Applied Sciences (Germany). It is recognised in the SED that there would be advantage in a broader international cooperation. Given the recent start of the college, however, the policy on internationalisation is not yet fully developed. Not surprisingly further international cooperation is listed among the opportunities in the SWOT-analysis. In the action plan special attention is given to exchange of staff and students. Task 32 for example defines that at least 2% of the students per class should spend at least one month abroad. Also the development of English courses is aimed at attracting incoming students. However, these targets will not be reached before 2014 due to financial constraints. At present, mobility of students and staff is primarily directed towards neighbouring countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Access to each other's educational programmes is easier because of the good understanding of the Croatian language in the region.

Although the panel is fully aware of the financial and economic setbacks, the college is urged to accord high priority to internationalisation. It is considered conducive to enhancing the overall quality of the teaching and learning opportunities, also at the bachelor's level. A policy document on internationalisation might outline the college's ideas, resources and arrangements for a systematic approach to further cooperation starting within the region and Europe. One objective could be engaging in international benchmarking to safeguard its unique position in professional IT education.

The college developed a comprehensive quality assurance system covering all aspects of its work. As indicated before, the quality policy is part of the overall strategy document. Relevant KPIs and actions regarding quality assurance (amongst other key areas) are listed. The college might want to consider bringing them together into one policy document on quality for easy reference and for purposes of review.

And while going over this exercise, the linkage between strategic aims, policies, KPIs and tasks might be re-examined. Procedural guidance in terms of manuals and rulebooks is readily available. What is missing though are policies per interest area containing statements of intentions and principal means by which they will be achieved. It is not clear, for example, why a specific policy on student support is missing whereas there are ample examples of excellent services, also for disabled students. Especially for prospective students it is essential to have this type of information readably available, also on the website. For the sake of clarity the same would apply to policies on human resources (including staff support and development) and infrastructure (focussing on well-equipped classrooms). Once again, most elements already feature in the strategy document.

As a result of its discussions, the panel determined that the college applies an appropriate policy on new programmes and initial accreditation. It is not clear though whether this policy is also available in a document. In the SWOT-analysis, the lack of a graduate programme is referred to as a weakness; the introduction of one is perceived as an opportunity to attract more highly qualified students and staff. The audit trail on the development of the master's programme provides evidence of a systematic approach towards new initiatives. The idea for a graduate programme was proposed to the Economic Committee (June 2009), and upon favourable reception an elaborate survey was done involving students, staff and the top 50 companies in Croatia. At present, a draft version of the programme taking into account the outcomes of the survey is being discussed with all stakeholders.

The college's financial resources are generally looked upon as a threat. The economic climate in Croatia and the Government's new system of financing public higher education have an unfavourable effect on this small and new competitor on the private educational market. As stated in the SED, some financial relief is expected from the Algebra Group. Even so, the college will have to redefine its priorities given the financial constraints, and look for additional funding elsewhere. Due to recent financial setbacks the international goals have already been adjusted.

It would be helpful also to distinguish more clearly between internal and external quality assurance. Both are dealt with in the SED and the strategy document but not explicitly. Setting up an effective internal quality system is obviously one of the management's priorities. At the same time, external legitimacy of the college's quality is equally important in order to maintain a strong market position. Maintaining and enhancing the quality of the programmes, however, should be the main focus of attention as it is directly beneficial to the teaching and learning process. The college should therefore strive to a more balanced focus on external quality assurance for evaluation

purposes on the one hand, and internal quality assurance for maintenance and enhancement purposes on the other. This is also one of the basic principles of ESG.

Procedures and rules regarding quality assurance are written down in the *Rulebook on the Quality System* (June 2010), also referred to as 'Book of regulations on Quality Assurance'. This manual 'stipulates the area of assessment, organisational structure and activities of the [college's] quality system' (Article 1). The document was formally introduced only a few months ago, and includes all necessary steps and processes to ensure high-quality outcomes.

There is evidence that all stakeholders were involved in developing the key documents. Students and staff are members of the Committee for the Strategy co-responsible for developing the *Development Strategy for 2009-2013*. They both also take part in the Committee for Quality, and various other bodies. Employers are primarily represented in the Economic Committee. The specific role and contribution of each stakeholder in the quality process will be discussed in more detail when assessing Standard 5.

Without any doubt, the college has an appropriate policy for the realisation of its quality vision. Strategic objectives include offering a high-quality teaching and learning environment, and establishing a quality system in accordance with ESG.

Assessment Standard 2 Policy – satisfactory

Ample evidence is given in the SED, the underlying documents and during the meetings that in general well-documented processes secure the quality aims allowing students to achieve their degree. Stakeholders – staff, students and employers – were actively involved in developing most relevant policies.

Policy documents and procedures are available. Some issues are not yet covered due to the recent start of the college. The panel identified a number of specific areas of interest for future development such as cooperation with Croatian polytechnics, internationalisation, and student support. These are touched upon in more general terms in the strategy document including the policy on quality assurance. In time, the college might want to consider using separate policy documents per interest area as to facilitate the processes for systematic monitoring and review.

The SWOT-analysis clearly marks the areas requiring future attention emphasising its strengths and opportunities rather than its weaknesses and threats. Much is expected from the implementation of an efficient quality system. In this context, the panel invites the college to find a more balanced approach towards external quality assurance for evaluation purposes on the one hand, and internal quality assurance for maintenance and enhancement purposes on the other.

Standard 3 – Results

The institution has insight into the degree to which its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides is being realised and it regularly measures and monitors the quality of its programmes by gauging the views of students, staff, alumni and representatives from the occupational field.

The college has defined 30 KPI's which are regularly measured (SED, 3.2.4). Satisfaction of staff, students and external stakeholders are evaluated as well (SED, 3.4). Furthermore, SWOT-analyses are made for the different aspects of the quality policy. At the audit meeting, also the *Annual Report on Implementation of Document Strategy for 2008-2009* was available. In order to measure its quality objectives, the college has established a sophisticated system of assembling, analyzing and using both quantitative and qualitative evidence of teaching and learning outcomes. The system allows examining the congruence of the results with the quality aims and objectives, and provides meaningful feedback that will stimulate further improvement.

In general, the college is well on its way to achieve most objectives directly related to quality. Good examples are the implementation of a quality system, the introduction of student surveys, the reaccreditation by FER and the participation in the NVAO pilot. Some plans were postponed due to financial impediments. Examples are the mobility of students and the actual start of a graduate programme. Other achievements could not be assessed due to the recent start of the college and the absence of graduates at this point in time.

The *Rulebook on the Quality System*, for example, is a very extensive manual but it is too early to make any judgements on its actual effectiveness. The mere introduction of the rulebook, however, is promising. And at the meetings, management and staff confirmed the willingness to implement the procedures as these are well designed

and relevant to the overall quality. The college appears more than capable to live up to the quality standards set by the rulebook.

Also the quality of the achieved learning outcomes could not be established as the first generation of students has still to graduate. Even so, the teaching and learning provisions are such that they enable students to achieve good results. Severe selection procedures apply aiming at attracting the best students. Ambitious and highly-motivated students opt for this private institution despite the high fees. High costs are often considered as a disadvantage of private institutions but apparently this is not always the case. In 2010-2011, there even was an increase of 20% in the number of first year students confirming the college's unique market position solely based on quality. And of course, as a private institution the college is well aware of the need to deliver quality at all times.

Student progress is closely monitored both on the individual level and at the institutional level. The educational achievements of students and classes are evaluated and compared with previous generations. Results are discussed in the various committees. Assessment models and criteria are simple, and organized in accordance with the ILOs.

Programmes are designed to cater for both full-time (high school students) and part-time (working) students. At present, there are slightly more full-time students. In fact, the same curriculum is offered but in separate classes. Part-time students follow class two days a week plus Saturday, taking into account the work schedules. Full-time students follow the same curriculum spread over five days. Wanting to meet the requirements of part-time students the buildings are open seven days a week.

Student survey results indicate that students are well satisfied with the available learning resources. The college's excellent infrastructure includes multipurpose classrooms, well-equipped laboratories and advanced e-learning facilities. On the premises is also located the Prometric Professional Test Centre allowing students to sit for a number of tests for internationally acknowledged IT certifications. Study material is provided for with the assistance of the Algebra Group, and recently a small library was set up. The college makes use of an electronic monitoring tool known as Infoeduka for educational parameters. As demonstrated during the audit, the data base contains information on student progress (including ILO's per course, attendance, grades etc.) and staff (including their bibliography). The tool has been modified not only to measure but also to analyse data.

Student surveys were introduced at the very start of the college. It shows the management's interest in whether students are having a sufficiently good experience at college. During the audit trail on student surveys, results from two student surveys were presented. They indicate that students are well satisfied with the learning resources available to them, and this is confirmed during the meetings.

The surveys aim at solving problems in the most efficient way. In setting up the surveys, the college profited from the experience of the Algebra Group. At present, the survey is more tailored to the college's specific needs. The grading was changed from 1 to 5 into 1 to 9, the number of questions has increased to 41, and room is provided for free comments to pin down issues and concerns. Surveys deal with topics as the performance of teaching staff, student support, assessment and feedback, learning resources. Surveys are anonymous, and they are conducted twice each semester. The first survey (after 5 weeks) makes it possible to take immediate action if necessary. The second survey at the end of the semester allows for more thorough analysis.

The audit trail provided clear evidence that good use is made of the student surveys. Proper analyses of the data are made, and appropriate action is taken in accordance with the outcomes of the surveys. Results of the surveys are discussed at the appropriate levels: the assistant to the dean being the president of the Committee for Quality reports to the Professional Council. As president of the council, the dean advises the Managing Board to take decisions on further actions. When assessing Standard 5, the decision-making structure as regards quality matters will be looked at in more depth.

Staff are well conscious of the importance of delivering high-quality education. The teacher-student ratio of 1:17 is considered adequate. Staffing policies and procedures all contribute to creating first-rate learning opportunities. One such example are the recently adapted guidelines for teachers outlining the organization of educational programmes. Another fine example are the well-functioning procedures for staff recruitment and appointment. The college invests extensively in the selection of good staff members wanting to reduce the risk of replacements. Therefore, a rigorous and thorough procedure is deemed necessary both by management and staff to guarantee success. Demands on teachers are high, and so are the expectations. In the job interviews and assessment, proper attention is paid to didactical skills and the ability to participate in the existing quality culture. When recruiting

additional staff members for the new master's programme, management expressed a clear preference for PhD candidates with extensive experience both in higher education and in industry.

Also current staff are well aware of the need to upgrade their academic education to the doctorate level, and to further develop their skills. In general, staff is found to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching in a number of ways. Salaries and remunerations are not only based on academic status but also on teaching performance taking into account the outcomes of student surveys. Staff development is embedded in the daily workings of the dean's office. Staff members are informed about new educational practice, peer reviews take place at regular intervals, and a wide range of opportunities is offered to develop and extend teaching skills. There is at least one example of teachers being removed from their duties if they continue to be ineffective. Personal development plans are being set up starting with new staff. At the meetings, individual staff members declared to be supportive of the measures taken to improve the quality of the programmes. They also confirmed to make full use of the opportunities offered.

One other provision stands out as it quite distinctly relates to the quality vision: a system of scholarships and loans in order to attract the best students. A total of four full three-years scholarships are financed by external stakeholders and members of the Economic Committee. In addition, not less than eleven partial (up to 30%) scholarships are available to best students in years one and two. The college also encourages students to take loans, granting them a grace period of four years after enrolment, making it one year after graduation. Reduced fees apply for students with excellent results on the entrance exam. In short, an extensive system for tuition and financial aid is available supporting the quality aims of the college.

Receiving funding for talented students is not the only evidence that the college widely cooperates with stakeholders in the appropriate occupational field. Both local and international IT companies are involved in all quality matters and at all levels of the educational process. The collaboration between the college and future employers is evidently advantageous to both parties. Indeed, half of the IT specialists in Croatia does not hold a bachelor's degree or higher. It is of great importance to the business world investing in their employees' further education that they get high value for their money. It is not surprising, therefore, that industry is represented in various committees and boards. Also the majority of teachers are employed by major IT companies or have extensive business experience. Computing firms offer placements, sponsor activities and offer summer jobs to individual students.

A good example of a successful business partner is APIS IT, a company visited during the audit and specialised in information systems and information technologies support. They provide placements, offer guidance to students when working on their final project, and award a scholarship for disabled students. Also some of their employees are currently studying at the college, and future plans for the college's career centre are being discussed. Not without reason, also the company has high-quality aims as 'to keep the leading role in the delivering of integrated services and leadership in modern technologies' (APIS website).

Another illustration of a successful link between industry and professional education is the setting up of a career centre. A former employee of a leading international IT company plays a leading role in developing the plans. The challenge is to match the graduates' future careers with the employers' needs. Many efforts are made to establish a good relationship with industry as good employability is crucial for future graduates. Actually, quality still has to prove itself as students have not graduated yet. It is therefore crucial to present the career centre also as a service to business. At present, ideas are being discussed with third year students, IT companies and the Economic Council. In the end, the Professional Council will be presented with a business plan.

Collaboration with higher education institutions in Croatia and abroad is also part of the college's strategic quality aims. In an audit trail the partnership with FER was presented. The faculty's commitment to the college is found to be a capital asset in more than one way. FER has been involved in the early stages of the design of the bachelor's programme, and has been engaged in the college at large ever since. The formal agreement between both institutions (October 2007) basically entails an assessment procedure on programme level. The idea is that FER issues an accreditation decision on a yearly basis. In order to be reaccredited the college goes through a systematic review cycle including a site visit by an expert panel appointed by FER, the scrutiny of documents, and the inspection of the Infoeduka IT system. In the end, the programme was reaccredited (January 2010). Positive programme reaccreditation to be issued annually by FER is listed among the KPIs and tasks in the strategy document.

The constant cooperation with FER is considered helping the college's credibility and integrity. This is not only due to FER's specific task in the quality system. Also individual commitment of (former) FER staff members adds to the

college's excellent reputation. FER members are actively involved in the teaching process, and participate in advisory committees. Given their qualifications they are expected to play a major part in the new master's programme.

As initiator of the NVAO pilot for institutional audits, the college has certainly taken a deliberate step in fostering the cooperation with other Croatian polytechnics. Indeed, two other institutions underwent an institutional audit as well. In planning and executing the project the three institutions work together, sharing insights and learning from each other's experiences. In addition, the college is involved in organising a workshop for a wider exchange of knowledge together with ASHE and the Croatian Council of Universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences (CCUUCAS). It was already mentioned that it might be worth considering including this combined effort and interest in the college's policy on collaboration (cf. Standard 2).

Only recently the college has developed plans to cooperate with higher education institutions abroad. As a matter of fact, signing one bilateral agreement per academic year is identified as a KPI although it does not figure in the action plans. Even so, negotiations are well on their way with institutions in Ireland and Germany. As acknowledged in the SED, there is still some work to be done regarding for instance ILOs and the availability of documents in English. Given the college's focus on quality assurance and the efficient approach to cooperation, the expectation to sign the contracts in the near future seems to be justified. In this context, also attention is given to mobility of staff. In 2009-2010, the college received its first visiting lecturers.

Other types of international cooperation are currently being looked at. One example is a research and development project for computerized testing of driving licences, a project proposed for EU funding. The college is also member of various international networks and specialist programmes in the field of computing and IT. Through these connections the college is ensured of the most up-to-date knowhow and high-quality input of industry. And of course the college's participation in the NVAO pilot also proves that international projects aimed at quality enhancement are actually executed.

Overall, quality indicators on internationalisation are identified but it remains unclear how some of them are measured. This is partly due to changing priorities following economic and financial setbacks. Nonetheless, as mentioned before the college needs to prioritize internationalisation and to strictly monitor the implementation by defining realistic objectives including measurable KPIs both in terms of time and quantity. One objective could be engaging in international benchmarking to safeguard its unique position in high-quality professional IT education.

In reference to ESG, comparing oneself with other similar institutions within the region and beyond is a valuable exercise. It certainly adds to the institutional self-knowledge and the improvement of one's own performance. Also offering (more) English taught courses can be considered.

Assessment Standard 3: Results – satisfactory

Results of evaluations and analyses indicate a systematic monitoring and review of programmes. The effectiveness of some quality procedures could not be established, though, due to the recent start of the college. Management information shows that quality is the college's prime concern. Indeed, the majority of KPIs and actions are directly related to quality goals.

Numerous underpinning quantitative indicators provide evidence that the system for quality assurance actually works. When reviewing processes explicit consideration is given to relevant statistical data. The system ensures that quality objectives are met, and new challenges are identified. Introducing a graduate programme and further internationalisation, for example, are challenges to address in the near future.

Good examples of quality-related achievements are the students' satisfaction results as demonstrated in the audit trail on student surveys. The college also succeeds in attracting the best students and highly-qualified staff, and is well on its way in creating the ideal classroom situation. A system of loans and scholarships is available to recruit the best students. Facilities and services for disabled students are in place including a special scholarship. The college also boasts an excellent infrastructure including state-of-the-art computer rooms and advanced e-learning facilities. The college success in involving major IT businesses in all quality matters and at all levels of the educational process is considered good practice.

Overall, the college succeeds in collecting and analysing quality-related information necessary to manage and enhance the educational programmes.

Standard 4 – Improvements

The institution can demonstrate that it systematically improves the quality of its programmes when necessary.

Although the quality system was only recently put into operation, there is ample evidence of improvement measures. Both internal and external evaluations add to the overall quality of the teaching and learning provisions. As asserted in the SED, 'constant quality enhancement [is] our most significant goal' (SED, p. 7).

At the early stages of the bachelor's programme, FER provided comments and recommendations as to improve the programme. Improvement measures are primarily related to the content of the curriculum (e.g. courses, assessment, and study material), learning resources and student support, and the qualities of good teaching staff. According to FER, in the initial phase the focus should be on a sufficient number of qualified teachers and a further specification of courses. Also good use is made of FER's recommendations regarding the implementation of the European credit transfer system (ECTS) and ILOs.

The college also drew heavily on the experience of the Algebra Group giving the new institution enough confidence to set standards high right from the start. After all, they are said to share the 'intrinsic strive towards excellence' (SED, p. 7). The Algebra Group proved itself a most valuable partner in the college's development of a robust quality system. Algebra's experience with quality procedures and documentation requirements according to ISO 9001: 2008 was helpful in setting up a quality system in line with ESG. Algebra's focus is primarily directed towards the flow of documents, and the design of rules and regulations. At the same time, as a higher education institution the college realizes that ESG require a slightly different quality approach. When discussing previous standards, it was already remarked that it might be worth considering to simplify some processes by using standardized key documents, and limiting the number of rules and regulations.

At programme level, at least two tasks in the action plan are related to systematic improvement. A programme panel will discuss necessary measures with the Committee for Quality and the Professional Council. In the past, the structure of at least one course has been changed. Also appropriate measures are taken to attract more and better students: admission criteria are stricter, students with deficiencies are offered additional courses, and a financial support system has been developed.

As illustrated before, the college seems to have comprehensive methods of surveying student opinion (cf. Standard 3). These surveys form an important element in maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities for students. Improvement measures following negative results in the student surveys are, for example, the replacement of a part-time teacher, an adjusted sequence of courses, and revision of some of the study material. Students testify to endorse the quality system as their opinion is taken into consideration. Following discussions, the surveys were modified as suggested by the students. Surveys are basically web based but it seems that paper surveys to be filled in in class generate a higher response. Again, students' opinions on what form to use best will be decisive in the final choice.

All survey results (anonymous) and formal decisions on quality issues are posted online. Discussions with management and staff, and scrutiny of documents (e.g. minutes of Professional Council) confirm that quality improvement measures are followed up. Actions are described, and results are presented at regular intervals. By way of example put forward by the Professional Council: a staff member advised to make his teaching practice more interactive will be supported by the dean's office. He will get special guidance, and peer review should enable him to improve his educational skills. In this particular instance, student surveys in the following semester already showed better results. Another example might be the already mentioned guidelines for teachers (cf. Standard 3) and the publication of own teaching material. The document has been finalised now, and it is validated by the Professional Council. The guidelines are mandatory, and although the new regulations are rather testing, staff consider them necessary for quality work. A last example concerns the development of study material. Students' reviews of material and discussions with the teaching staff have resulted more than once in the adaptation of course material.

The management is well aware of the importance of a good functioning quality system resulting in various external assessment procedures carried out by national and international agencies and institutions. In the preliminary phase, the college used to its advantage the *Recommendations for More Application-Oriented Informatics Study Programs* (March 2005) issued by the German agency ASIIN to set up its first bachelor's programme. This Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering is founded in 1999, and a full ENQA³-member since 2007. As

³ ENQA, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

stated in the SED, all suggestions were considered including the recommendations on certification and internationalisation.

The bachelor's programme went through its first informal assessment procedure in 2007-2008 carried out by FER. The initial accreditation procedure by the National Council for Higher Education results into temporary accreditation (June 2008) upon which the college is founded. Permanent accreditation for the bachelor's programme is granted two years later (July 2010) by the Ministry. Regular assessment by ASHE is planned for, the first time in September-October 2011. In addition, FER reaccredited the programme in January 2010, and preparations are under way for renewal of this accreditation early 2011.

At institutional level, the audit as part of the NVAO pilot is crucial in obtaining information on its own performance set against international standards. In the course of its short existence, the college gained enough confidence and know-how to participate successfully in the project. The SED explicitly refers to the institutional audit as supporting its quality assurance system and illustrating its 'determination for success and better competitiveness'.

Changes for improvement over a longer period of time are also subject of internal and external evaluations. The introduction of a quality improvement plan alongside the quality action plans per interest area might be considered in due time. Areas of attention which have been identified in the SWOT-analyses are internationalisation (including mobility, research projects, and cooperation), new programmes, and new partnerships (including industry and higher education institutions). Management is well aware of this, and is in the process of discussing these challenges at the appropriate levels.

Anticipating the outcomes of the NVAO pilot, a major point of attention will be the further development of the college's internal and external quality assurance system in accordance with ESG. Again this is recognised by the management, and the NVAO pilot is expected to contribute largely to the realisation of this goal. The college is particularly encouraged to use more explicitly the ESG as leading principle in all quality matters.

Assessment Standard 4: Improvements – satisfactory

Ample evidence is given of improvements measures taken by the college to enhance the quality of its programme(s). Results of internal and external evaluations demonstrably lead to the improvement of the teaching and learning opportunities. In due time, the college might consider the introduction of a quality improvement plan alongside the quality action plans per interest area in order to better monitor improvements actions. More in general, the college is encouraged to use more explicitly the ESG as leading principle in all quality matters.

Good practice is the management's awareness of the importance of a good functioning quality system resulting in various external assessment procedures carried out by national and international agencies and institutions. Especially considering the early stage of development, the college's focus on quality assurance is noteworthy.

Standard 5 – Organisation and decision-making structure

The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure regarding the quality of its programmes, in which duties, authorities and responsibilities are clearly delineated and of which the input of students and staff constitutes a part.

At institutional level, the organizational structure of the quality system is well-defined (SED, 3.2.1 and 3.6.1). The Committee for Quality has responsibility for the quality system. The responsibilities and tasks of the committee are clearly set out in the *Rulebook on the Quality System*. Its primary task is to measure the KPI's, and advise on quality enhancement. The committee reports its findings and recommendations to the Professional Council. In the early days of the college, the council dealt with all quality matters as the Committee for Quality was not yet operational. The dean's office is responsible for further action and implementation of improvement measures. Ultimate responsibility for the college's educational provisions lies with the Managing Board.

Students and staff are represented in the various boards and committees where quality issues are discussed. The occupational field is represented in the Economic Council in which smaller local IT companies though seem slightly underrepresented. Scrutiny of documents and discussions with stakeholders confirm that enhancement is firmly embedded in institutional culture and structures. All relevant stakeholders participate actively in the quality assurance system. The student section is said to be working on an alumni network.

At programme level, the idea is to work with a panel if major changes are called for. This panel will operate under guidance of the Economic Council. In the end, the Professional Council will decide on further actions as advised by the panel.

The dean's office is found to play a key role in assuring the quality of the education offered. The dean is chair of the Professional Council; the assistant to the dean is chair of the Committee for Quality. Together they combine leadership and team player qualities. The dean's office is successful in involving all stakeholders in the dynamics of this young college investing largely in its quality objectives. In creating this climate of openness and transparency, the college is well on its way to become a high trust organisation. Once having reached that degree of trust, the college can simplify its procedures, and reduce the number of rules and regulations. At this point already, many issues are solved via informal and shortest ways. This mechanism adds to the overall feeling of teachers and students being the real owners of the quality system.

As confirmed at the meetings, some staff members serving on the various committees and board have been trained. This training is provided by the dean's office through workshops and seminars as to increase the effectiveness and improve the ability to partake in quality involvement. The college should certainly continue investing in its staff active in quality assurance, and extend these training facilities to students. Although students are found to make an effective contribution to quality management, an augmented input could be generated through better and more focussed guidance. Students informed the panel to be highly interested in such training.

Students' participation in the quality system would also benefit from the availability of all necessary information on student's involvement on the college's website. A complete set of documents (also in English) regarding the quality system and its various (sub)committees needs to be easily accessible for all stakeholders. A special webpage on quality assurance has been launched but information is partial.

Publishing new survey results, recent improvements measures, current quality issues, and minutes of the latest meetings of (sub)committees is essential for maximum involvement and transparency.

Given the small scale of the college with only one bachelor's programme, management at institutional and at programme level coincide. Consequently the decision-making structure is relatively uncomplicated, and communication with boards and committees is authentic and efficient. As a private institution, the college obviously applies the best value for money principle by making use of a structure fit for purpose. In due time, the quality system and its organisational structure might need slight adaptations to cater for more programmes and more complicated decision-making processes.

Assessment Standard 5: Organisation and decision-making structure – satisfactory

Structures facilitate the implementation of the college's policies to realise the quality aims and objectives. Quality enhancement appears to be firmly embedded in institutional structures and culture. All relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the cycle of evaluation and the improvement of the education programme(s). The quality assurance system is adequate enough for a small-scale institution but slight adaptations might be needed to manage and enhance the quality of a larger and more complex higher education institution.

The capability of the dean's office to establish a certain degree of trust in which creative energy is directed towards quality enhancement, constitutes a feature of good practice.

General conclusion

From its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides, the executive board of the institution has developed quality relevant structures and processes that allow monitoring in a systematic way the quality of the educational programmes offered and contribute to quality enhancement. These quality relevant structures and processes include sufficient guarantees to detect and remedy perceived weaknesses and, finally, to maintain or move towards a robust and transparent system of internal quality assurance.

The college presents a clear vision and policy on quality, and has implemented the necessary organizational quality structures and associated procedures involving all relevant stakeholders. There is clear evidence that the quality system is effective including an information system to collect, analyse and use relevant quality parameters. The college has a simple and appropriate structure for detecting quality problems and taking corrective actions.

General conclusion – satisfactory

Quality of the programme(s) now and in the future is the top priority of the management resulting in an efficient internal quality system. Consequently, all five standards of the NVAO framework are assessed satisfactory. As such, the college sets a good standard for internal quality system, for institutions for professional higher education in general and for the private sector in particular. In doing so, the college demonstrates good practice.