

## 1. The Basic Concept

### 1.1 The Development of the Basic Concept

During the summer semester of 2005, the board of the Business Department at the University of Applied Sciences Fulda decided that the economic education at the undergraduate level would continue in the future exclusively within the framework of the 6 semester Bachelor program, which was already in existence. This course of study would have a concentration on International Management or International Business Administration.

The bachelor program “International Management” was first accredited on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 2002 and is now up for reaccreditation.

An increased focus on internationalization of the program had already begun in 1991 with the program “European Economist (Dipl.)” and with the inclusion of other European partner universities. In the spirit of the Bologna Process, the course offering was then restructured into Bachelor and Master programs with a focus on International Management.

The structure and the content of the course of study “International Business Administration”, which is now up for reaccreditation, are based on the course content and the experiences with the bachelor program “International Management”. In order to be able to do justice to the demands and expectations that the practical world will have of the qualifications of our students, we have conducted talks with the management of big and middle sized companies and included empirical studies about the expectations of the practical world regarding the qualifications of students of Business Economics.

(1) The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Bachelor program “International Management” is essentially based on the results of the evaluation of the Business Department about the individual lectures, on complementary interviews with the students – especially the representatives of the student council – as well as the experience of the faculty both in and outside of Germany. The students of the Business Department have indicated, both in interviews as well as by way of the course evaluations, that the module offerings essentially correspond to their expectations. Comments by the students regarding missing modules or modules that should be adapted in some way (for example logistics, interdisciplinary-oriented content and key qualifications) were included in the development of the new structure. We

have also been very pleased so far to hear the comments from professors of our partner universities, who emphasize in oral and written form, the high qualifications of our students during their semester abroad.

(2) Representatives of the Department of Business have had focused discussions with the management of large and middle-sized German companies in order to find out the essential expectations which the companies have for the education of German graduates of business economics. Interviews were conducted with representatives of large, internationally active corporations as well as with middle-sized companies based in the Fulda region (ex.: Siemens AG, Adam Opel AG, Gummiwerke Fulda, IHK Fulda, Wella AG, and Ondal Industrietechnik GmbH, tegut..., Gutberlet Stiftung & Co. in Fulda). The interviews showed that the companies and the personnel departments expect an international education of the students. This refers to the imparting of business management content in an international context, language competency – especially the English language, and additional language competencies if necessary – and complementary key qualifications in an international context. In addition to an education which contains the fundamental basics of business management, these representatives also expect extended knowledge in other individual areas of concentration concerning business management. Job advertisements of the past few years also make clear the expectations which companies have about the computer skills of graduates, especially concerning the use of software which is standard in the area of business management.

The results of the analysis of the previous program of study have been incorporated into the structure and content of the “International Business Administration” course of study.

(1) The internationalization of the course of study represents a core element of the entire study offering and will be explained separately in section 1.2.

(2) The first part of the course of study only shows minor changes to the previous study content; it shows the adaptation of individual modules.

(3) In the second part of the course of study, there is a substantial change in the choice of an area of concentration in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester and an additional choice of subject in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester. A majority of representatives of both the students and the companies prefer the

possibility of choosing an area of concentration. Experience with the areas of concentration for the Diplom course of study “International Business Administration” was drawn on for the choice and content design of this area of concentration. The content of the subjects for the area of concentration was condensed and specifically complemented with internationally oriented content. An additional, substantial change deals with the 5<sup>th</sup> semester. In the future, the students should have the possibility to complete a professional training semester (PTS) (internship) in an international context, instead of the semester abroad. Through this, the students should obtain insight into business practices in an international environment. The PTS will be accompanied by seminars, which will be conducted and moderated by professors of the department. Experience with the “Diplom-Betriebswirt” course of study can also be included in the organization of the PTS, and then be supplemented with interdisciplinary and internationally oriented content. In an interdisciplinary oriented PTS seminar which took place in the winter semester 2005/2006, professors in the department carried out a pilot project in which the interaction between accounting and logistics was given special consideration. Additional changes to the second part of the study program deal with content adaptation of individual modules, and focus on supplementing the areas of key qualifications and cross-functional business content.

## 1.2 Internationalization as a core element of the basic concept

Based on previous experiences, the current concept of the internationalization of the undergraduate business education should, in the future, be anchored in three core areas:

### (1) Study content in an international context:

Especially in the second part of the study, business economics and management content will be dealt with, with a special consideration of international aspects. During the course of the study, suitable learning modules in the form of international comparative studies will be offered. Whenever possible, these will take place with the cooperation of colleagues from our foreign partner schools. This also includes specifically organized empirical investigations.

In order to support self-study, these comparative studies will be made available in the future to the students on an E-learning platform. The coeducational methodology and the didactics of this educational concept will be rounded off by periods of attendance by the respective

foreign colleagues. Up to 4 professors will be present for a month each. The financing for this course of action is made possible by the existence of an unfilled position.

Ways in which the implementation of the internationally oriented content can take place will be outlined below, based on a few examples.

In the winter semester 2006/2007 and in the scope of the “Bachelor in International Management” course of study, the business management fundamentals will be presented in the first semester, with a strong international connection. Students can enroll in the course: “Fundamentals of the Business Value Creation Process” to be given exclusively in English by a guest professor from Australia, or in a bilingual course which is offered jointly by a German and an American colleague. Consequently, the students receive subject-related language competencies early on, and become familiar with the international subject matter of business management. These experiences should flow into the future teaching of the module in the “International Business Administration” course of study.

Some of the modules which have been incorporated into the course of study have a strong international connection by definition. For example, economic policy and international economic relations, business law II as well as multi-company logistic chains. These modules can be taken over or supplemented by visiting colleagues.

For other modules, especially in the major areas of concentration, international comparative studies present a good opportunity. Conceivable ideas in this area could be for example, comparative studies about consumer behavior in varying countries.

(2) Language education through the employment of American and Australian colleagues:

The education is carried out in a corresponding scope through the employment of a full time American professor and the above-mentioned visiting professors.

A language education is deliberately not included in the program of study as a required module. It is pointed out to students before the beginning that course content is also taught in English. Students whose language competence is incomplete or who would like to expand it

have the possibility to enroll in corresponding elective modules, which are offered as supplements to the required courses.

### (3) Studying abroad / Internship in an international context

It is recommended that students study abroad at one of the partner universities during the 5<sup>th</sup> semester. Before beginning the semester abroad, students receive a list of the course offerings at the foreign partner university with information about which of those courses, after the transfer of the grades, are recognized as fulfilling the requirements of the Department of Business. While preparing the transfer list, it was taken into consideration what knowledge the students in semesters 1 – 4 have obtained. At least 4 courses are chosen from this list. Required elective courses that are successfully completed at foreign partner universities are recorded on the bachelor diploma as a test achievement. Additional proof of achievement can be recorded on the bachelor diploma as electives. The stay abroad can also be rounded off by a practical phase in a foreign company.

As an alternative to going abroad, students can also complete a professional training semester, preferably with functions that have to do with an international context (see explanation in 1.1).