European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of Corvinus University of Budapest, MSc in Public Policy and Management (KGKP) Programme MSc in Public Policy and Management (PUMA) Programme.

The EAPAA Accreditation Committee, at its meeting of 10 September 2019 in Belfast – UK, has evaluated these programmes against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria.

1. Accreditation Criteria

2. Applicability/Eligibility	
2.1 Domain	The programmes fulfil the criterion of academic public administration set by EAPAA.
2.2 Geography	Hungary is a member of the Council of Europe, therefore the programme falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	Both programmes fulfil the criterion of programme longevity for normal accreditation.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	The KGKP programme is provided both in full-time and part-time versions. The part-time version is not suggested for accreditation, as it does not fulfil the criterion on longevity. The curricula of the programmes are similar in all important areas (see section 5.5 Curriculum), but the KGKP is taught in Hungarian and the PUMA in English. Both programmes are provided in the same location.
4 Category of accreditation	Both programmes fall within the category of public administration master level programmes (1 or 2 years).
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration	The programmes fulfil the criteria of the academic content of Public Administration as it is understood by EAPAA. The management of the programmes might consider, whether the share of law could be slightly stronger, for example, by providing also one or two elective courses of law, to strengthen the multidisciplinary nature of the programmes.
5.2 Mission of the programme	While on paper (SER report), the programmes have a core mission, its description of the intended learning outcomes (objectives of the program, competences learned by graduates) and educational approach is less convincing. These descriptions (particularly those on p.23, SER)

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	could apply to any programme, and are not specifically tailored to these programmes on public policy and management. More attention might be paid to aligning mission, competences, course-level intended learning outcomes, and the use of different methods of assessing learning – thus specifying the educational philosophy of the programmes in more operative terms. The site visit did inform us that there is a joined understanding of what the unique selling points of the programmes are. In terms of providing clearer information for prospective students, it might help the programmes to make their core mission and overall programme objectives (intended learning outcomes) more specific (highlight the unique situation of the strong economic component of the programmes, as well as their strong focus on discussing practical real-life problems).
5.3 Level	The programmes fulfil the criteria of providing descriptions of the qualifications of master degree graduates in general terms, but the programmes should provide descriptions of their own qualifications more concretely adapted to their substance.
5.4 Practice and internships	The programmes organise adequate training for practical skills as part of their course provision in accordance with the mission of the programmes and their intended learning outcomes. However, the programmes should clarify their policy and responsibilities as for internships to make them more transparent to students and stakeholders.
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	The curriculum is well-structured, the structure of mandatory and elective courses provide many opportunities for students to create individual study paths. The core courses offered in both variants are in line with what is expected in a degree on Public Administration. The multidisciplinary approach, and its strong focus on economics, is to be applauded. While the old situation with only one skills course in the core curriculum was somewhat meagre, the site visit team is happy to learn that the programmes currently have three mandatory skills courses. This will help students to be better prepared for writing their final thesis. While the description of the courses is generally sufficiently insightful, we do observe variation in the clarity and amount of information provided per course. Several students also hinted during the interview that they were not always satisfied with the ease with which they were able to obtain the relevant information on the specific courses, or the potential electives to be selected. The course descriptions for several of the courses also demonstrate that some of the assigned readings are relatively outdated, and might need an update. In some courses, the assigned readings only rely on handbooks. It would be good for an MSc programme to also include relevant, and up-to-date, journal articles. Some of the Hungarian courses are very much focused on Hungarian literature only. It would be good for these students to also become acquainted with the international literature in the field.

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5.5.1.2 Other Components	The programmes offer a wide range of specialization options for students, and students appreciate the choice on offer. The options are consistent with the objectives of the programmes.
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme	While the SER as such provides limited insight, the site visit did inform us that there is a joined understanding of a clear educational or didactical approach that is shared among the staff members. In terms of providing clearer information for prospective students, it might help the programmes to make their strong focus on discussing practical real-life problems more explicit as a unique selling point. Particularly the alumni highlighted this as something that really appealed to them when looking back at the strengths of the programmes – its unique link between theory and practice, and the ability to learn how to apply academic knowledge to real problems and case studies.
5.5.1.4 Intake	The programmes fulfil the EAPAA criteria of intake.
5.5.2 Length	The curriculum length of the programmes fulfils the EAPAA criteria.
5.5.3 Results	The programme management indicates that there is no relevant alumni association, and no structured gathering of data on alumni (in addition to university-wide, professionally managed Alumni Association; SER, p. 49). So there is no systematic insight into where students end up working. The evidence appears to be only anecdotal. Staff seem to be too overburdened to take care of these sort of additional things. Under these circumstances, the programme management might make an initiative on the level of the Faculty/University to develop more centralised services to this end. The nine alumni we met all have good positions in relevant organisations, but this information is too incidental to allow us to judge whether overall the final qualifications have been achieved. In sum, there is no systematic practice to assess to what extent the final qualifications achieved by the graduates meet the intended learning outcomes as a whole.
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	The programmes use evaluative information on the accomplishment of course objectives, but they should pay more attention to more structured and regular procedures in collecting information on alumni and other external stakeholders relevant for directing the revision of the programme as a whole. There is no overall description of the accomplishment of programme learning objectives and how it has changed over the years. The programmes should consider different options for more systematic follow-up of how the learning outcomes are achieved and use this information in the development of the programme as a whole.
5.6.2 Curriculum Development	There is a formal process for making changes in the curricula, but the programme management should pay more attention to the curriculum development process to ensure that all relevant actors and their views – students, alumni, staff, stakeholders – are involved and that the process

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	in transparent and known to all relevant actors and based on acquisition and analysis of relevant information.
5.6.3 External Reviews	It is evident that the programmes have taken external reviews seriously and they have led to changes in the content and organisation of the programmes.
5.7 Student Assessment	While assessment is a topic on the agenda of staff meetings, it might benefit the programmes to more structurally discuss an overarching assessment policy of the programmes, aligned with the intended learning outcomes. Do the assessment methods used per course optimally link to the intended learning outcomes of that course? Is there sufficient spread, and logical build up, in the assessment methods throughout the curriculum. Such questions are currently difficult to answer. There is no independent exam or assessment committee responsible for quality control of assessment. The site visit team is convinced of the structure with which the thesis process and assessment procedure is organized. The students are well-informed in advance, and receive sufficient guidance. The increased number of methods and academic writing courses also help in this respect. While the students and alumni we talked to were satisfied with their own thesis supervision, several of them indicated that they have heard from fellow students who were less content. It might be worthwhile for the programmes to structurally keep an eye on the quality of the supervision process. The structured writing process with intermediate deadlines that students need to pass, ensures that only those students who are likely to pass the thesis actually make it to the end of the process. This helps staff to ensure that the workload of thesis supervision is manageable.
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	The programmes fulfil the EAPAA criteria of programme jurisdiction. However, the programmes should find ways for more systematic influence of students, alumni and external stakeholders in the development of the programmes – especially, in the processes preparing the decisions for formal administrative bodies.
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus	The programmes fulfil the EAPAA criteria of the existence of faculty nucleus and the staff involvement in major areas of academic work.
5.9.2 Faculty qualifications	It could be beneficial to more structurally make use of educational development and pedagogical courses, as they are provided by the University. While external guest speakers (teaching in majority of courses) are also evaluated by students – and staff members indicate that the cooperation will be discontinued in case of continuously poor evaluations – however, the interaction with guest speakers seems to be rather informal. As student feedback is only one aspect of the quality of teaching, a more systematic approach for assessing the qualifications of external staff should be in place, especially as they also may take part in assessing the quality of MA theses.

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5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	The programmes fulfil the EAPAA criteria of staff diversity.
5.10 Admission of Students	The EAPAA criteria of the admission of students are met. However, it is recommended that the gender balance of both the applicants and admitted students and the educational background of both applicants and admitted students are followed on annual basis so that the programme management would be better aware of the trends and may related them to the requirements of institutional policies and the mission of the programmes. Moreover, there is a concern related to the sustainability of the PUMA programme, because it is so dependent on the continuation of the scholarship by the Hungarian government (currently 80% of the PUMA students come in via a stipendium). Discontinuation of the scholarship might jeopardize the student intake to this programme.
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities	The EAPAA criteria are met adequately.
5.12 Student Services	The student services are adequate to programmes. However, there is space for developing more fruitful collaboration with the Career Development Office, especially considering the improvement in utilising the alumni network. Monitoring student attrition should be analysed by sex in order to following up major differences.
5.13 Public Relations	Should the PUMA programme wish to increase the number of international students without a scholarship, it would benefit to pay more attention to the marketing of this programme. The website as it currently is, will have difficulties in attracting more students. The programme management indicated that the faculty and university-wide marketing strategy might not be sufficient to reach this aim. Having a clearer mission statement of the programme on the website would also help in being able to better 'sell' the programme to prospective students. This unique bridge between public policy and management with a strong addition of Economics, combined with the very practice-oriented team-work approach should be better used as the core mission of the programme.

A more structured and strategic collaboration with external stakeholders would support the program development. Perhaps it might be beneficial to set up an advisory board of external stakeholders. |
| 6. Additional Criteria | Not applicable. |

2. Conclusion

Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that the programmes meet the criteria for accreditation sufficiently and can be accredited without restrictions.