

**External Examiner's Report  
Ternopil State Economic University**

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**1. Introduction**

On June 13-17, 2006, I visited the Ternopil State Economic University (TSEU). I had very informative meetings with the Dean of the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty and a number of lecturers and students. The meetings have been very informative and I am grateful to those willing to share their views with me. I am happy to observe a growing awareness among teachers and students alike of one of Ukraine's most serious and widespread problems, corruption. I applaud this, as awareness is a prerequisite for fighting corruption. Graft and corruption are impediments to a healthy business climate. Generally, the awareness of this major problem should grow further among students and staff.

It is admirable what the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty has achieved despite the very difficult financial and economic conditions. I was pleased to learn that the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty has become a real faculty with three departments. From the organizational point of view this is a major improvement and facilitates a better communication and cooperation not only between departments, but also between individual teachers from different departments.

Obviously, the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty is very committed to its students, which the graduates explicitly acknowledged at the 2006 graduation ceremony. Also, the faculty's students are well motivated. I was pleased to learn that a master program will be added from the academic year 2006-2007. Finally, it was pleasant to observe that under the guidance of the dean of the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty my visit was very well prepared and organized.

**2. Term papers**

- a. The bachelor students were required to submit a term paper by December 26, 2005. However, one of the papers was submitted on June 14, 2006. As a result, this paper could not be evaluated on time and the student did not receive the certificate.
- b. Like in the past few years the students have been provided with elaborate guidelines for writing a term paper. The written guidelines are of good quality and provide the students with relevant and useful information. However, I observe that the students often neglect the guidelines and appear to have difficulty in writing an academic paper.
- c. Plagiarism is a temptation for students, but it is wrong for two reasons. First, it is wrong from

the ethical point of view. Second, it is wrong from a practical point of view, as one does not learn anything from copying a text. On the web, however, students are encouraged to plagiarize. There are web sites selling papers including custom-written papers. In accordance with recommendation 3a in my 2005 report students are now required to sign a plagiarism statement that clearly defines plagiarism and specifies what is and what is not permitted. It also clearly details the consequence if students plagiarize: they will not receive their bachelor certificate. This is an obvious improvement. Detecting plagiarism continues to be a challenge for teachers, however.

- d. The students are expected to also submit their papers to an English language teacher, so that the papers' language can be checked. However, not all papers appear to be signed by an English language teacher. Moreover, it is not quite clear what the English language teacher's task is. I observed that a number of papers written in fairly poor English were signed by an English language teacher. Obviously, the presence of an English language teacher's signature does not imply that the paper has been written in proper or acceptable English. Thus, it seems that the teacher is not expected to evaluate or improve the language.
- e. I have read all 25 term papers that have been submitted. Generally, the quality of the papers was similar to that of the papers in 2005. However, I clearly observe an improvement in that the supervisor's written comments are now more elaborate and of a higher quality than in 2005. Also, I have understood that the supervisor has commented on earlier versions and that she has given the students a chance to revise their papers before submitting the final version. This is another improvement I observe as by doing so the learning effect of writing a term paper is considerably increased.
- f. The papers give rise to the following observations:
  - Some papers have been written in poor English. In one of the papers the language is so poor that it is not always understandable.
  - Some papers have a poor structure and are poorly organized.
  - Some papers are purely descriptive and/or journalistic and do not contain any analytical elements.
  - Some papers do not lead to any conclusion or present vague conclusions.
  - Bibliographies are sometimes poorly organized, for example by listing references randomly rather than alphabetically or by listing them alphabetically according to titles rather than authors' names.
  - Some papers contain references to sources that are not included in the list of references, whereas students sometimes include sources in the list of references without referring to them in the text.
  - Some papers simply reproduce (parts of) a textbook including examples.
  - At least one paper seems open to suspicion of plagiarism. The student seems to have copied most of the text from (Ukrainian) web sites. However, as the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty does not have software available for detecting student plagiarism it is difficult to prove it.

### 3. Exams

I have understood that most of the courses taught in English have been tested orally. *Basics of Accounting* seems the only course taught in English that has been concluded with a written exam. I went through the examination questions of this course and observed that the test is comprehensive. It consists of several sections containing multiple choice questions, true/false questions and open questions. The test specifies both the time available for the test as a whole and the points that can be earned per question. However, the number of multiple choice questions is too small for a statistical analysis to be meaningful.

#### **4. Continuing improvements**

I value to repeat what I observed in earlier reports. Generally, both teachers and students have done good work. I am confident that the gradual process towards implementing western standards will continue. This will put the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty in a good position to participate successfully in the Bologna process. I observe a great potential at the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty to realize this goal.

The following points need to be addressed to continue the ongoing process of further improvements:

- (a) Given the widespread problem of corruption in the Ukrainian society and its harmful consequences for the business environment, the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty may want to consider adding a course on *Ethics* (or a more specific course on *Business Ethics*) to its curriculum. This could be done either in the bachelor or the master program.
- (b) The format of the term papers can be further improved. In particular the language often needs to be improved, but there is also ample room for improvements with regard to other aspects including the structure, references and bibliographies. Generally, academic writing could be improved.
- (c) Plagiarism remains a problem. The Internet is tempting in that it makes plagiarism fast and simple.
- (d) Both the format and the composition of the examinations can be further improved. Oral exams have some advantages. For example, they may be efficient, in particular if the number of candidates is small. Oral exams also have some disadvantages, however. A major disadvantage, for example, is that they tend to be more subjective than written exams.
- (e) The level of some of the staff members needs to be improved, while human resource management is needed.
- (f) Administrative matters can be improved. This is possible in the domain of personnel management as well as in the domain of student affairs.

#### **5. Recommendations**

I have observed that the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty is able and willing to work on addressing the

problems mentioned above. My reading of the papers and my discussions with staff and students give rise to the following concrete recommendations that may assist the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty in its ongoing efforts to increase its academic level.

- (a) Although good written guidelines for writing a term paper are available, students do not always follow the guidelines. The supervisor observes this briefly in her comments. I consider it an improvement that the supervisor's written evaluations are more elaborate than they were in 2005 and I would encourage expanding the written evaluations further. In addition, the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty may consider introducing a best paper award for the best bachelor paper.

**Recommendation 1a:**

*Instruct supervisors to pay attention to the guidelines in their guidance of the students and to write more elaborate evaluations of the papers.*

**Recommendation 1b:**

*Consider introducing an award for the best bachelor paper.*

- (b) The quality of the term papers varies widely. This pertains both to the substance (including structure and conclusions) and the format (such as referencing and compiling bibliographies). A number of papers are poorly organized, descriptive rather than analytic and/or journalistic rather than academic. A number of students appear to have difficulty writing papers that meet academic standards.

**Recommendation 2a:**

*Organize a course in academic writing.*

**Recommendation 2b:**

*Require students to submit two hard copies of their term paper: one to their economics supervisor and one to the Department of Business Communications and Organizational Behavior. This would facilitate to connect a second learning effect to the paper in that it could improve the students' English language skills. The paper could thus be used for two different evaluations: 1) an evaluation of its economic content; 2) an evaluation of the English language.*

- (c) I suspect that at least one of the papers is largely based on texts copied from the Internet. This clearly illustrates that plagiarism remains a problem. There is a wide supply of software that has been developed to detect plagiarism. Prices of the software also differ widely. A search on the Internet will deliver a number of web sites providing more information, including [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org), [www.plagiarism.com](http://www.plagiarism.com), and [www.plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu](http://www.plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu). My impression is that students currently take it for granted that the chance is very low that plagiarism will be detected.

**Recommendation 3a:**

*Require students to also submit an electronic copy of their paper (in addition to the two hard copies). This would facilitate the application of software to detect plagiarism.*

**Recommendation 3b:**

*Add to the guidelines for writing a term paper a warning that the papers may be subject to a plagiarism check by using plagiarism detection software. A growing awareness among students that the chance of being caught is high will likely reduce their propensity to plagiarize.*

(d) The quality of the examinations can be further improved.

**Recommendation 5:**

- a. *Encourage teachers to check each other's draft examination questions. Experience shows that teachers tend to have a blind spot for mistakes or shortcomings in their own examinations.*
- b. *Consider the possibility to increase the number of multiple choice questions such that it allows for a statistical analysis of the validity of both the examination as a whole and each individual question.*
- c. *Repeat the course "Drafting examinations" for teachers.*

(e) Human resource management is necessary for an organization to function properly. Evaluations of personnel are a regular component of personnel management. Crucial is that the evaluations of staff are carried out transparently and by using the same method for all categories of personnel. Note that evaluations of staff are a form of two-way traffic. It is not only the department head who evaluates a staff member, but also the staff members who evaluate the working conditions. For example, it gives staff members the chance to signal the lack of certain materials, or the occurrence of certain conditions affecting the quality of their work, or the need to take courses to improve their skills, etc. The evaluation should be considered a staff member's right.

**Recommendation 6:**

- a. *Department heads evaluate their staff members on an annual basis, while they report to the dean.*
- b. *Design a standardized form for this purpose so as to ensure that all staff members will be evaluated in similar ways and by using the same method.*
- c. *A personnel officer assists department heads in making and administering these evaluations.*
- d. *Organize a course on university personnel management.*