



EPAS - EFMD Programme Accreditation System

- **What is EPAS?**

EPAS is an international programme accreditation system operated by EFMD. It aims to evaluate the quality of business and/or management degree programmes that have an international perspective and, where of an appropriately high quality, to accredit them.

The process involves a review in depth of individual programmes through international comparison and benchmarking. The process considers a wide range of programme aspects including:

- The market positioning of the programme nationally and internationally
- The strategic position of the programme within its institution
- The design process including assessment of stakeholder requirements – particularly students and employers
- The programme objectives and intended learning outcomes
- The curriculum content and delivery system
- The extent to which the programme has an international focus and a balance between academic and managerial dimensions
- The extent to which the programme promotes the principles of responsible management
- The depth and rigour of the assessment processes (relative to the degree level of the programme)
- The quality of the student body and of the programme's graduates
- The institution's resources allocated to support the programme
- The appropriateness of the faculty that deliver the programme
- The quality of the alumni and their career progression
- The existence of robust quality assurance processes

The evaluation report also includes the provision of strategic advice on how the programme may be improved so as to compete more effectively in international markets. Where appropriate, focus may be put on the programme's compatibility and/or conformance with the Bologna structure.

- **Provide information on the background of EPAS**

EPAS is designed as a quality enhancement process for particular programmes within an institution. The EPAS process is based upon a conceptual framework of quality standards that have been agreed by an international committee of EFMD members and which are continuously reviewed. The EPAS standards ensure that programmes are designed and delivered so that they are both academically rigorous and have practical relevance.

The framework considers the EPAS Accreditation Model as an input-output model moving from programme design to programme delivery and operations and finally to programme outcomes. However, programmes are not delivered in isolation from their parent institutions and therefore the framework also considers the Institutional and wider context and the institutional and programme quality assurance processes.

The Institutional Context

The Institutional Context reviews the extent to which the programme is an integral part of the institution's strategy and therefore the extent to which it is supported by the management, the faculty and the other resources necessary for its successful delivery. It should also meet the requirements of national regulations and international norms. The quality of faculty, including their intellectual activities such as research, and their ability to deliver the programme are of paramount importance.

Programme Design

Programme Design covers an assessment of the likely market for this area of study and clear objectives should be specified for the programme linked to market needs. The target entry profile of students should be specified and also the target exit profile of graduates. This also influences the modes of delivery. To ensure achievement of these goals, Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) should be specified for the programme as a whole and for its component courses. In turn, the assessment regime should clearly specify how achievement of the ILOs will be measured. The programme objectives and ILOs should lead to the detailed design of programme coverage and content, how it will be delivered and the assessment methods.

Programme Delivery & Operations

Programme Delivery starts with specifying the student entry criteria necessary to attract the required entry profile and also the selection methods to be utilised. This should lead to an appropriate quality of student intake. Teaching should be of high quality and of appropriate academic depth. A variety of teaching methods should be utilised supported by quality teaching materials. Acquisition of knowledge should be supported by the development of personal skills to enhance their future life and employment. The latter is likely to require the students being able to interact with the corporate world and they should also gain an international perspective to enable them to understand global business and international affairs.

Programme Outcomes

Programme Outcomes is concerned with evaluating the quality of the student outputs in terms of assessed work and whether the programme ILOs have been achieved. It also evaluates whether the programme actually delivers the previously specified target graduate profile. To this end, opinion is sought from alumni and employers and the programme reputation in the market place is also assessed.

Quality Assurance

Finally, there should be robust Quality Assurance processes, which should cover the design and review processes including approvals, maintenance of teaching quality, and rigour of the assessment processes. There should be mechanisms not only for annual review but also for periodic fundamental review of the programme.

Institutional Improvement

Although a maximum of two programmes (or programme sets) may be assessed in any review cycle, institutions frequently bring forward more programmes for review subsequently. This enables them to progressively strengthen their programme portfolio and, at the same time, to strengthen other aspects of their resources and activities such as the quality of the faculty and consequentially the quality of intellectual or research output. This enhancement process should lead to the holistic improvement of the institution.

- **What are the benefits of accreditation?**

Accreditation from EFMD is one of the best and most complete ways to certify the quality of a Business School as accreditation involves an extensive self-assessment by the School, a visit of an international review team who spend several days interviewing many different people in the School, and finally a very experienced jury evaluating the assessment and findings of the review team to determine whether the Programme(s) should be granted accreditation. There are currently no substitutes for such an in-depth assessment of quality.

There is a wide misconception that accreditation is about box ticking and conforming to imposed standards but this is completely off the mark with accreditation from EFMD. Accreditation is about excellence and continuous quality improvement linked to the strategy, vision and leadership of the Business School. It is also forward looking and helps a School to set a quality agenda for the future. None of the rankings, stars, palmes, voting systems, referrals, etc. come close to the quality assessment process involved in going through accreditation. If you are a student, parent, or employer or simply have an interest in business education, then the first and most important credential to look for in a School or a Programme is: "does it have and accreditation from EFMD?"

Specific benefits to a school include:

- Information for the global education market on the basis of substance
- International recognition of excellence: international development
- Mechanism for international benchmarking with the best
- Sharing of good practice and mutual learning
- Agenda for quality improvement and future development
- Acceleration of quality improvement in international management education
- Legitimacy to internal and external stakeholders that you have a strong international reputation (donors, alumni, government)
- International legitimacy: recruiting international students; creating double degree partnerships; forming international exchange relationships; recruiting executive development clients; recruiting new faculty

EPAS was launched in 2005 and in the past 14 years has had a considerable impact on the quality of business school programmes all over the world. As of 19 February 2019, **111 programmes from 81 Institutions across 36 countries** have been awarded EPAS accreditation.

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