EFMD Quality Improvement System

UCL - Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain School of Management

PEER REVIEW REPORT
Presentation to the EQUIS Accreditation Board on 15 June 2016
Executive summary

Louvain School of Management has developed further as an excellent school of management within an internationally renowned university. The following summary broadly follows the structure of the EQUIS standards.

One of the key developments of the School has been the articulation of a clear mission: "to create and diffuse knowledge and best practices in the field of responsible management in an enriching and stimulating working environment to the benefit of our main stakeholders, our students, with the ultimate aim of developing the skills and competences that national and international private and public organizations need to thrive in terms of excellence and ethics in business."
Towards delivery of this mission, LSM has created a Strategic Road Map and there are many examples of how the roadmap is now being actively used to identify, initiate and execute actions. This was the first of 5 ‘areas for improvement’ identified by the previous PRT and much appreciated by the PRT in its articulation of necessary projects, timelines and KPIs.

On the other hand, the School’s clarity on its own strategic competitive positioning would have been improved by the inclusion of a SWOT analysis. Also, there were limited comparative perspectives with respect to other schools in Europe and little recognition of the possible threat of what at best might be stable funding from the state and university to the School’s reputational aspirations.

The PRT was particularly impressed by the comprehensive re-working of the Competency Framework – a compass to guide the quality of programmes across all levels and campuses. Pedagogical innovation has been a strong focus during the last three years, with the launch of 3 MOOCs on the edX platform – a coordinated offering of introductory courses including marketing, strategy and finance. The PRT was impressed by the regional positioning gained by these developments and the PRT encourages the School to consider embedding these initiatives even more strongly in their overall strategy.

The PRT commends the high quality of core Faculty, their development and management. Although the PRT agreed that the criterion of international development was being met, progress was judged to have been somewhat slow, with both increases and decreases in the proportion of international core Faculty over the three years since the previous PRV, rather than a gradual but steady improvement. Moreover, the envisaged return to 25% does not seem to have been quite realised, yet, and the School is encouraged to redouble its efforts in this regard.

The PRT was impressed by the management and output of research, with particular reference to the structures deployed for hiring. Moreover, the Centres of Excellence provide a strong identity in which researchers can develop their expertise and the PAIC encourages clarity of ambition towards progress in faculty research careers. One small point of note, however, was that the publication targets for professors were not felt to be particularly ambitious, particularly given the very high quality of many of LSM’s publications.

Three new Executive Education programmes have been launched in the current year. Two objectives for Executive Education are frequently specified:

1. Transferring knowledge and best practices to currently active decision-makers; and,
2. Helping to integrate the School and its faculty into the corporate world and society at large to ensure that all teaching, R&D and service activities continue to address real relevant needs.

In the context of these two objectives, the PRT is of the view that the establishment in 2014 of a dedicated legal entity, LSM Executive, to act as “marketing arm” of the School in the field of Executive Education is a positive action. However, the School also mentions modest income generation as a further third objective in parts of its narrative. Measured against this objective there is a lack of specific targets, identification of potential courses and integration into Faculty workload to design and deliver new courses. Overall, the PRT perceived a lack of clarity with respect to the role that LSM would prefer for Executive Education in its development.

The PRT noted the real progress made towards greater clarity in understanding costs, revenues and contribution of the School to UCL. Moreover, it was noted that the higher levels of clarity had opened routes for discussion on investment in the School based on its overall contribution to UCL. The PRT further appreciated the unique position of the School in UCL in that it has a direct line to the Rector through the Strategic Board, an integral part of its governance system and encouraged the School, where possible to make more frequent use of this channel to assist in the development of the School.

There has been consistent attention given to internationalisation since the last EQUIS PRV and the School is making steady progress, particularly with 10 new exchange agreements bringing the total to 150; double degrees with 8 Universities globally and the largest percentage of international students in the PhD programme (54% this year). In the graduate Masters programmes, regularly enrolled foreign students make up about 10% of cohorts, though including incoming exchange students gives an average of 25% foreign students in the classroom. In addition, the specialist tracks on the Masters deliver around 300 international students to LSM each year. The PRT understand LSM’s desire to grow the proportion of foreign students principally through double degrees but considers that the level of resourcing in the international office of the School to be on the low side for much further international development of this nature.

There is clear and consistent evidence of the value of ERS in the competency framework, Faculty and support staff actions and activities. This commitment was echoed by many of the stakeholders meeting the PRT, who was impressed by this achievement and considers the School to be exemplary in this regard.
Equally, there is a clear and pervasive strand of corporate engagement in LSM, which impressed the PRT and serves as an example of best practice.

Overall, therefore, the PRT finds that there is improvement across the majority of the standards, with a few criteria exceptions in: the competitive position analysis, marketing planning and the level of resourcing for the stated intentions in internationalisation. Only with respect to standard 6, was there felt to be a need for greater clarity of objectives and alignment of resources with the intentions for the School.

Overall, the PRT considers LSM as a strong community of learners, with a clear focus on ERS, much strong research output, practical learning, and corporate engagement which is further leveraging its position from a world-class University.