

Publisher

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)

Title of publication

The evaluation of higher education in business

Authors

Jyrki Wallenius, Katri Ojasalo, Mervi Friman, Mari Hallikainen, Tomi J. Kallio, Jaana Sandström, Mika Tuuliainen & Kirsi Mustonen

The evaluation of higher education in business was carried out in 2019. The evaluation produced an overall picture and information about the state of the education provision in the field, the competence base and the working-life relevance of degrees. The evaluation focused on the strengths and development needs in the field, as well as on the ability of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the higher education system to develop the provision of education in response to the changing competence requirements and future operating environments.

All the universities (10) and universities of applied sciences (21) which provide higher education in this field participated in the evaluation. The evaluation covered Bachelor of Science (Economics and Business Administration), Master of Science (Economics and Business Administration), Bachelor of Business Administration (UAS), and Master of Business Administration (UAS) degrees as well as continuous learning. The evaluation questions were the following:

1. What is the current state of the educational provision in the field?
2. What knowledge base is the development of the education provision built on?
3. What processes and networks are found in the field in relation to the development of educational provision?

This report is based on evaluation data obtained by using a number of qualitative and quantitative methods and by working together with higher education institutions delivering education in this field, students and stakeholders.

The evaluation finds that **the key strengths** of higher education in business are:

- **A competence-based degree structure that produces both generic working life skills and content-related competence.** The field has a broad consensus of the knowledge and skills that a graduate in business should have.
- Education programmes in business produce degrees with **a high working life relevance.** UAS degrees are working life oriented, and university degrees emphasise working life and research-based knowledge. The graduates' **employment situation in the field is good.**

- **The internal national cooperation structures**, which cover all HEIs offering business degrees, are a strength for both the university and the UAS sector. The network of business education providers in the UAS sector and the Association of Business Schools Finland in the university sector support the **internal coordination and development of the educational provision** offered at the national level.
- Internationalisation has diverse and significant impacts on the education offered by the HEIs. The **requirements of internationalisation** have been addressed in many ways in the **planning and implementation** of the degree programmes. The HEIs participate extensively in **international networks and partnerships**. In the university sector, **international accreditations** bring added value to the development of degrees.

The **key recommendations** for higher education in business are:

- In 2019, students could complete a higher education degree on 49 campuses, and almost 10 000 degrees are completed every year. The evaluation group recommends that **the number of campuses offering higher education in business should not be increased** from the 2019 level. There is also **no need to expand the education** further either in the university or the UAS sector.
- The evaluation group recommends **more systematic cooperation between the university and the UAS sector at the national level**. Through more intensive national cooperation between the higher education sectors, the division of labour between the HEIs, the profiles of Master's degrees, and the provision of continuous learning could be further clarified. By developing cooperation related to the content of teaching between the sectors, the delivery of educational programmes could be made more efficient, and the quality of teaching and learning could be improved.
- The evaluation group recommends that the HEIs develop procedures for anticipating and responding to future challenges and working life competence needs. The HEIs should **collect and analyse foresight data systematically and draw on this data at all levels of their operation**: at the level of degrees, field and higher education institutions, and in developing continuous learning.
- The UAS sector should develop procedures for **systematically developing personnel competences** to ensure that they meet future requirements. Universities of applied sciences should also ensure that **education is based not only on strong working life connections but also research**.
- The evaluation group recommends that **the HEIs offering business education intensify their dialogue with business life regarding continuous learning**. The development of working life-based implementation models of continuous learning is in its early stages. By stepping up cooperation, especially with different business segments, new types of continuous learning models suitable for companies' needs can be developed. At the same time, the educational provision to meet the needs for continuous learning can be significantly upgraded, for example to respond to the challenges of digitalisation arising in working life.

Keywords: competence-based approach, continuous learning, education provision, higher education, higher education in business, higher education institutions, internationalisation, profiling, steering of higher education, universities, universities of applied sciences, working life relevance.