

PROGRAMME REVIEW

**Bachelor in Global Business and
Entrepreneurship - Bachelor in International
Affairs**

Vesalius College

Brussels - May 2023

PROGRAMME REVIEW VESALIUS COLLEGE

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Content

- Preface VLUHR Quality Assurance Board..... 3
- Programme review 4
 - Introduction..... 4
 - Panel composition 4
 - Review principles..... 4
 - Preparation..... 4
 - Visit..... 5
 - Report..... 5
- Programme report..... 6
 - Conclusion 12
 - Summary of the commendations 13
 - Summary of the recommendations..... 13
- Annexes 14
 - Annex 1: Administrative details of the programmes 14
 - Annex 2: Short CV panel members 15
 - Annex 3: Visit schedule..... 16
 - Annex 4: Overview of consulted documents 17

Preface VLUHR Quality Assurance Board

Dear reader

This assessment report deals with the programme review of the Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship and the Bachelor in International Affairs at Vesalius College. This programme review was conducted by an independent panel of experts in March 2023.

This report is intended for all stakeholders of the programmes and provides a snapshot of its quality following the review principles for quality assurance for programme assessments in Flanders. As chair of the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board, I hope that the panel's findings, judgements, recommendations, and commendations will advance these programmes. Additionally, this report intends to provide information regarding the quality of the programmes to a wider audience. For this reason, this report is published on the website of VLUHR QA.

I would like to thank all members of the panel for the time they invested and the dedication they showed carrying out this programme review. At the very same time, this review was only possible because of the commitment of all those involved at the programmes. I hope this report does justice to their efforts.

Mia Sas
Chair VLUHR Quality Assurance Board

Programme review

Introduction

This assessment report presents the findings, judgements, commendations and recommendations regarding the Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship and the Bachelor in International Affairs at Vesalius College. For the administrative details of the institution and the programmes involved, see Annex 1.

This programme review was carried out in accordance with the Manual for Programme Review.¹ Nina Geenen, Policy Advisor at VLUHR QA, was project manager of this programme review.

Panel composition

The proposal of candidate panel members was approved by the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board on 13 October 2022. The composition of the panel was ratified by the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board on 15 November 2022.

The panel has the following composition:

- Jan Orbie, Professor at the Department of Political Science, Ghent University (chair)
- Helen Dexter, Associate Professor of International Politics, University of Leicester
- Manuela Moschella, Associate Professor of International Political Economy, Scuola Normale Superiore
- Kylian Schalembier, Student, Bachelor of Science in Political Science (third year), Ghent University

A short cv of the panel members is included as Annex 2.

Review principles

The programme review was conducted in accordance with the eight quality features. These features are the characteristics of a high-quality higher education programme, defined by NVAO and tied in with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015). For each programme whose quality is satisfactory, the presence of the following quality features is guaranteed:

1. The programme's learning outcomes constitute a transparent and programme-specific interpretation of the international requirements regarding level, content, and orientation;
2. The programme's curriculum ties in with the most recent developments in the discipline, takes account of the developments in the professional field, and is relevant to society;
3. The staff allocated to the programme provide the students with optimum opportunities for achieving the learning outcomes;
4. The programme offers the students adequate and easily accessible services, facilities, and counselling;
5. The teaching and learning environment encourages the students to play an active role in the learning process and fosters smooth study progress;
6. The assessment of students reflects the learning process and concretises the intended learning outcomes;
7. The programme provides comprehensive and readable information on all stages of study;
8. Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible.

In addition, a programme ensures the involvement of internal and external stakeholders on the one hand and external and independent peers and experts on the other hand, in a continuous pursuit of quality development. If applicable, the programme must also comply with relevant regulations with respect to the admission of graduates to corresponding posts or professions.

Preparation

In preparation of the programme review, the programmes compiled a self-evaluation report in accordance with the VLUHR QA Manual for Programme Review. The panel received the self-evaluation report (including supporting

¹ <https://www.qualityassurance.vluhr.be/documents>

materials) several weeks before the visit of the programmes. The panel thoroughly studied the self-evaluation report and its annexes to prepare for the visit.

On 9 February 2023 the panel members attended a training session organised by VLUHR QA. During this session, the panel members were informed about the programme review process. Special attention was given to the status of the programmes, quality assurance in Flanders and Europe, the Review Principles and interviewing techniques. Also, a schedule for the site visit was agreed upon, enclosed as Annex 3. Finally, the self-evaluation report was discussed in depth to prepare the site visit.

Visit

The panel carried out the programme review on 1 and 2 March 2023 at Vesalius College in Brussels. During this site visit, the panel conducted interviews with all those involved in the programmes in order to gain insight into the quality of the programmes, including management, students, teaching and supporting staff, alumni, and employers. These interviews took place in an open and constructive atmosphere and provided the panel, in addition to the documents studied (see Annex 4 for an overview), relevant insights regarding the quality of the programme. A visit of the facilities was also planned. In order to give all stakeholders the opportunity to talk confidentially to the panel, there was an open consultation. At the end of the site visit, the panel discussed its findings, judgements, recommendation and commendations with the programme management in a co-creative session. After a final panel meeting, the panel shared its main conclusions with the programme management in an oral report.

Report

In the subsequent assessment report the panel provides the findings, judgements, recommendations, and commendations regarding the quality of the programmes as a whole. The panel also formulates a conclusion at the end of the report, readable for a broad audience and including an advice for accreditation, as well as a list of commendations and recommendations. The programme management was given the opportunity to respond to the draft of this report before finalisation.

Programme report

This report covers the evaluation of the Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship and the Bachelor in International Affairs at **Vesalius College**. The College was founded in 1987 by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Boston University's Metropolitan College. The aim of the College was to offer high quality liberal arts undergraduate programmes based on interactive teaching, entirely in English, while taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by its Brussels location, most notably in terms of networking with and involvement of policy-makers. The College currently offers three bachelor's programmes and the two master's programmes.

In 2021, Vesalius College formed an alliance with VUB's Institute for European Studies (IES). The two internationalised institutions continue their academic activities with a focus on European and global affairs under the name of **Brussels School of Governance (BSoG)** ever since. The two entities remain functionally independent, but were able to establish a single governance structure by having identical boards. The purpose of the alliance is to pool their means and combine their strengths: IES brings their postgraduate education and research traditions to the table, whereas the College offers educational experience with their undergraduate and graduate programmes. The panel notes that the teaching and supporting staff confirmed that, after a transition period, it has become clear what gains have been made by entering into the alliance. Especially the merger of the two teams of supporting staff is considered very valuable. For example, the BSoG was able to hire a marketing and communications officer with the purpose of enhancing the internal and external communication policies of the programmes.

The Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship (BUS) accommodates an average of 51 students in their three-year trajectory, whereas the Bachelor in International Affairs has 40 enrolled students on average. Figure 1 shows the **student numbers** in bother bachelor's programmes since the previous review. Intake has remained stable over the years with a slight dip from Fall 2020 until Spring 2022, likely an effect of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programmes are generally happy with the current student numbers, since they allow them to maintain their current way of teaching. Their intake target is 25 to 30 new students per programme per year. If student numbers exceed this, it can cause problems in terms of infrastructure and classrooms. When this happened in the past, programmes had to organise parallel sessions for certain courses or move some course activities to larger premises at the VUB.

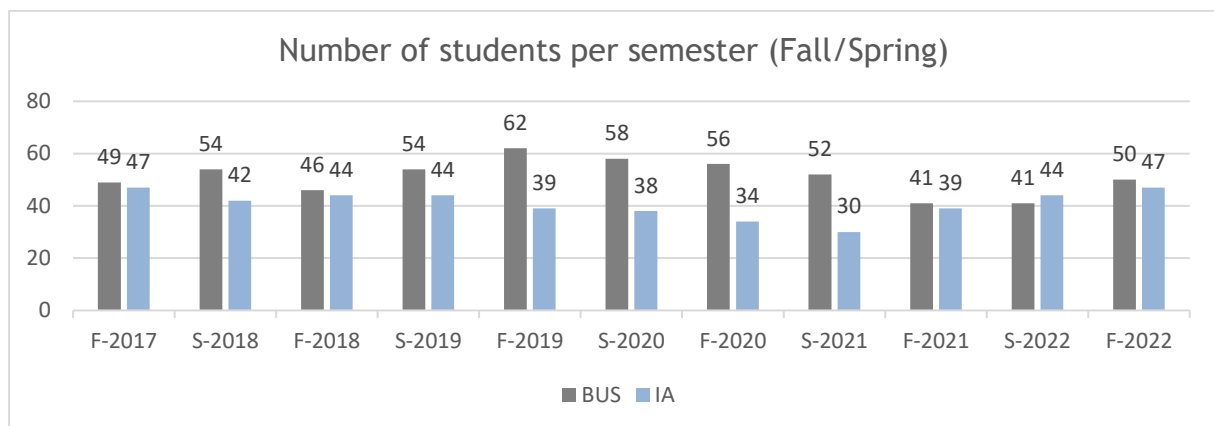


Figure 1. Number of students in the Bachelors in Global Business and Entrepreneurship (BUS) and International Affairs (IA).

The **Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship** aims to offer students insight in the academic and professional field of business management, with particular attention to the global and supranational dimension. The programme seeks to distinguish itself from others by interweaving two tracks throughout the curriculum: the theoretical (management) and vocational (entrepreneurship) aspects of business. The curriculum of the **Bachelor in International Affairs** emphasizes an interdisciplinary content approach of international affairs. The curriculum is built on the disciplines of Politics, History, Economics, and Law and aims to familiarize students with the complex dynamics, core debates, processes, institutions and major challenges of European and international

relations. The panel is appreciative of the profile of the programmes. The discussions with students and alumni clearly confirm that both programmes have succeeded in their goal to establish themselves as international and highly interactive.

The panel commends the distinct **profile** of both programmes. Together with the Bachelor of International and European Law, Vesalius College offers an interesting and complimentary range of academic bachelor's programmes. Discussions with students, alumni and teaching staff revealed that they all share a strong sense of identity with their programme. The panel also noticed that a common set of values emerged during the conversation with the different stakeholder groups, such as a liberal and open attitude, an international/global mindset, as well as an appreciation of diversity. The Brussels location is often cited as a main strength of the College, because of the proximity of international institutions and companies for internships. The panel confirms that the College successfully capitalises on the benefits of their location, when looking at the profiles of the students and faculty, as well as the (extra)curricular activities students have access to.

The profile of the programmes is translated in **learning outcomes**, which meet the standards of the Flemish Qualification Framework regarding level and orientation. The outcomes seem to be aligned with international standards and requirements, as well. The panel does note that the outcomes have remained the same since the programme review in 2015, even though there were changes to the curriculum such as the introduction of the bachelor's thesis in its current format. The panel therefore advises both programmes to have a critical look at their learning outcomes, and to focus and update them where necessary so that they align better with current situation. Another recommendation is for the Bachelor of International Affairs to refine their learning outcomes in relation to the interdisciplinarity and/or multi-disciplinarity of their programme. The fact that multidisciplinary is apparently also used as a synonym of interdisciplinarity (in the report and also in discussions) indicates some lack of clarity in the use of these concepts and their implications for the programme.

The learning outcomes serve as the basis of the **structure** of the programmes. Both academic bachelors are comprised of 180 ECTS. Both three-year programmes have a similar design, built on a set of shared core courses (42 ECTS). This academic core provides a good foundation for the international and heterogeneous intake of the programme, making sure that all students have the necessary competencies to further deepen their knowledge and develop their academic skills over the course of their programmes. The rest of the programmes consist of 'major requirement' courses, which are discipline-specific and cover the major theories and methods of that bachelor's programme; 'major electives', a set of discipline-specific courses from which students can pick and choose to tailor their specialisation in the discipline; and 'free electives', which give students the freedom to widen their focus and include courses from other disciplines, or to further deepen their knowledge of their own major. Students can also choose to include an international exchange in their trajectory. The panel is satisfied with this programme structure, as it should allow students to achieve the learning outcomes and take ownership of the learning process. One instrument that the panel finds very useful for students in constructing their curriculum is the programmes' course catalogue. This document contains all the ECTS course descriptions, but it also outlines the key procedures within the programmes, includes the rules and regulations of the Vesalius College, and describes the variety of student services for students. The panel recommends that College review the balance in the curriculum between politics, economics, law and history for the Bachelor IA and considers where there might be overlap between courses covering IR theory.

As mentioned before, the programmes have a very international scope. Vesalius College explicitly aims to attract an international student body, as English is the official language within the institution. This results in a **broad and diverse** intake of applicants for the two bachelor's programmes, which have a student population of more than 55 different nationalities. All students who have graduated secondary school are eligible. Admission is further based on a holistic assessment of candidates' academic performance, English language skills, and overall profile. Vesalius College offers a preparatory programme of one semester for international students who lack certain academic competencies or study skills and who wish to properly prepare themselves for an academic education. Upon successful completion, the students can transfer to one of the three bachelor's programmes.

The learning environment of the two programmes is built on a new pedagogical approach for all its programmes in 2020. The panel learned that this approach is based on four pillars: **Student-centred, Theory-guided, Educational excellence, and Practice-embedded (STEP)**. This teaching and learning philosophy provides the

framework for all educational development within the programmes and shapes the learning environment of the students. The panel commends the STEP approach since it provides clear guidance to the teaching staff with its high practicability, and is tailored to the international profiles of the programmes' target audience.

A central element of STEP is **student-centred education**, which means that the programmes put the support of each individual student at the core of teaching and learning. The small size of the programmes allows for good and often informal interactions between the students and the staff. Students met by the panel stated that they perceive their teaching staff as very open, approachable, and always ready to help. The programmes clearly promote an activating way of teaching and learning. Since the students take their classes in relatively small groups, they are encouraged to actively participate in all learning activities. Students are often privy to one-on-one guidance in the classrooms. In their discussion with the panel, students showed to be very appreciative of the often individual and extensive formative assessment they receive throughout their learning process. Some students did remark that they would prefer more opportunities for feedback after the examinations. The panel confirmed with the programme management that it is already possible for students to request feedback on their graded exams, but it seems that they sometimes lack awareness of this fact. Therefore, the panel recommends the programmes to raise this awareness. A possible way to do this is by having the academic advisors go over the exam results with their students and having them encourage the students to contact the (relevant) teaching staff members for additional feedback.

The student-centredness of the programmes also leads to a well-equipped system of **student guidance**. The programmes use the system of academic advisors, who serve as a first point of contact for students with questions concerning their study path. Their role is not only demand-driven. Advisors are expected to actively assist students with their progress throughout the programme, for example by intervening when a student misses consecutive classes. The panel is impressed with the extensive academic support that students receive, once again highlighting the open and constructive atmosphere that the programmes have created for students and staff. This sentiment was echoed by involved stakeholders, who were appreciative of the practice of academic advisors. During the discussion with the teaching staff, however, the panel was alerted of the fact that the parameters of the role of academic advisor are somewhat unclear. The panel notes that the current ambiguity can lead to two potential threats: some students receiving more or less support than others, but also certain faculty members experiencing a supplementary workload due to the unclear limitations of the position. Similar concerns emerged in the discussions with students and teaching staff. The panel therefore advises the programme management to provide a more clear and detailed description of the role of academic advisor. The programmes should clarify when and how academic advisors are expected to help students, but also which matters lie outside of their expertise and should therefore be redirected to other student services.

Next to the academic advisor, the programmes offer a wide range of **student support** services such as a school psychologist, a student support assistant who aids students with special needs, an admissions officer who helps incoming international students with their integration processes, as well as coaching sessions for students who want advice regarding internships, study exchanges and (potential) job applications. During the discussions, the students confirmed that they can rely on a number of persons in case they have questions or problems. The panel states that the students they met are active and prove that they take their own initiative when they are facing any potential problems. The panel commends the programmes' attention to inclusivity and student support. Given current trends, such as a general decline in the well-being of young people and its effect on students' academic performance, student support is and will remain an essential part of higher education. The panel therefore recommends that the programmes maintain their current practices, continue to monitor the welfare of their students and step up their efforts if the situation calls for it. The panel noted that the programmes do not have an internal ombudsperson for their students. Currently, programme directors fulfil this role. The panel urges the programmes to appoint a neutral ombudsperson for students, someone who is not involved in their assessment or certification and can therefore act as a completely neutral point of contact.

During the visit, the panel got insights on how the learning environment at Vesalius College is implemented in practice. They learned that the teaching staff is assisted in all their educational endeavours by the **Office for Teaching and Learning Innovation (OTLI)**. This organisational unit serves as a knowledge hub for all teaching staff with a focus on pedagogical innovation and the use of technology to enhance learning. They offer online trainings and workshops for teaching staff on various topics, such as evidence-informed teaching, (blended)

learning design frameworks and principles, student learning, assessment and feedback, etc. Faculty members can also request one-on-one meetings for advice on all kinds of educational development. The panel is very positive about the expertise and services that OTLI offers and recognises the role that they played in the flexibility and resilience that the programmes showed in adaptation to COVID-19 and all the (technological) challenges it posed. The panel encourages the programmes to keep investing in the OTLI team, so that they can continue and further develop their good practices in the future.

The panel recognises that students have access to all the facilities required for succeeding on their programme of study. The students met confirm that they have access to the infrastructure of VUB (library and online data bases, software, as well as the student restaurant and all other student facilities) and they find this very useful. Though there is still some room for improvement and modernisation of the classrooms, the panel commends the well-developed (digital) **learning environment** the programmes offer. This environment does not only include classrooms and other educational infrastructure, but the campus itself can be considered a meeting place for teaching staff and students. The panel is impressed with Vesalius College's 'living campus' and the free-to-use space they offer students between classes, as well as their plans to further develop this in the future.

During the discussion with the teaching staff, the panel learned that the programme management encourages them to experiment with **innovative teaching methods** and new course contents. The staff receives support through the professionalisation initiatives of OTLI, or via one-on-one support per request. The teaching staff describe the programmes as an open and constructive working environment, where change is given a chance to grow from the bottom up. The programme management requests faculty members to write a thorough proposal for the changes and/or new opportunities. In dialogue with the faculty member in question, they decide if the changes are compatible with the learning outcomes of the programme and tie in to the curriculum as a whole. The panel appreciates the balance the programmes have found between course and curriculum development, whilst preserving the academic freedom and ownership of their teaching staff.

The panel appreciates the implementation of the 'theory-guided' and 'practice-embedded' elements from the STEP-approach. The extent to which the programmes have integrated **both academic and vocational skills** into their courses and learning activities is commendable. Students, alumni, and representatives of the professional field echoed this sentiment during the discussions. Practice-oriented learning activities are often organised by adjunct professors, experts from the working field who combine their professional activities with a part-time teaching assignment at Vesalius College. External speakers are also regularly invited to speak within specific courses, or during (extracurricular) events that are open to students. These methods increase the authenticity of the programmes and their learning environment.

The academic and theoretical learning pathway culminates in a **bachelor's thesis**. Students are required to write a research paper consisting of a literature review, a conceptual model, a methods section, and an empirical analysis of the results. The bachelor's thesis consists of two courses: in the first semester, students attend a preparatory seminar and write an extended thesis proposal under the supervision of the course instructor. In the second semester, students are assigned an individual thesis supervisor who guides them in fine-tuning their proposal, conducting the data collection, and analysing their results. The teaching staff added that the thesis supervisors enlist the help of (external) specialists as co-supervisor of the thesis, when and if the subject matter of the thesis lies outside their field of expertise. During the interview with alumni, the panel learned that the guidance of students when working on their theses varies, but that they were overall satisfied with the individual guidance and support they received. The panel examined a sample of theses and confirms that the evidence demonstrated a good quality. They seem to be graded in line with standards applicable to the area, and the panel commends the rubrics and a grading scale the programmes provide to teaching staff for the assessment of bachelor's theses.

The vocational track builds towards the **Capstone course**, which aims for students to synthesise and draw upon their acquired knowledge and skills to address a complex, real-life policy problem for an external client from a major international organisation or a non-governmental organisation. The learning and research process is led by the students themselves, who have to work together in teams. The purpose of this course is for students to experience a professional work environment. The programmes are aware that this course puts a considerable amount of pressure on students, not only because of the scale and unique setting of the project, but also the

element of teamwork and the frictions this often accompanies it. Alumni and students confirmed this during the discussions, but they were mainly very appreciative of the learning experiences that this course created for them. The panel examined the output of the Capstone course and confirms that it, in combination with the bachelor's thesis, guarantees the FQF 6 level of graduates of the programmes.

An important element that needs to be monitored when implementing the STEP approach, is the workload. Students told the panel that, generally speaking, their **workload** is well balanced: they are kept busy and on track, without creating a total overload. They attribute this to the fact that the programmes are well constructed and that deadlines are coordinated within the programme. The programme management confirms that the workload has been monitored and adapted over the years to make it more feasible. However, students and alumni reported to the panel that the combination of the bachelor's thesis and the Capstone course in the final semester can be overwhelming. The panel encourages the programmes to continue their efforts in coordinating assessment tasks and monitoring the overall workload of students. They also advise the programmes to explore the option to move the Capstone course to the fifth semester of the curriculum, in which students have a lighter workload with regards to their bachelor's thesis. The programme management of the Bachelor of International and European Law has already chosen to implement this change. The panel thinks it prudent for the two programmes to monitor the impact on the Law programme and determine if there is a profit to be gained by moving the Capstone course to the fifth semester as well.

Due to the close links that exist between programme management and teaching staff on the one hand and students on the other, students experience few problems with composing, going through and completing their study path. The students met confirm that issues they raise are dealt with quickly. The panel also finds it remarkable that few outstanding areas for improvement were mentioned during their discussion with the students. These facts and efficiency of the STEP approach are reflected in the **progress rates** of the programmes. For example, less than 3% of the students who are currently enrolled in the programmes is more than one year behind on the standard trajectory. Drop-out rates are even lower with the occasional individual dropping out due to external factors, according to the programme management.

The **teaching staff** of the programmes consists of core group of permanent faculty members, whose areas of expertise cover the key domains of the curricula. They are complemented with adjunct professors who are responsible for teaching the more specialised and/or practice-oriented courses, in light of their expertise from the professional field. The panel notes that the staff is enthusiastic and of high quality. All teaching staff seem to be very dedicated to the programmes and have good collegial relationships. The panel recognises that teaching staff has an excellent track record in terms of academic achievement and/or professional experience. The panel also commends that the adjunct faculty members seem to be well integrated into the faculty. As mentioned above, the panel finds that the professional expertise and networks that the adjunct professors bring is an added value for the programmes.

The aforementioned alliance with the Institute for European Studies, thus creating the Brussels School of Governance (BSoG), has made it possible for permanent faculty of the programmes to receive part-time **ZAP-appointments** at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. This statute has two main advantages. First of all, it makes the staff eligible to apply for certain research fundings (e.g. FWO-grants), something that was not possible before. Secondly, it allows for the permanent staff to recruit and supervise PhD students. The allied institutes have also pooled their resources in joint research centres of which all permanent staff are members, allowing them to further build up their research portfolios. The panel is appreciative of the new research opportunities that the BSoG alliance has created. They advise the programmes to take full advantage of this, for example by providing their students with more niche and research-led modules that draw on the staff's research specialisation. An additional advantage is that the potential PhD vacancies offer graduates of the programmes a better perspective on an academic career.

The **workload of the teaching staff** is considered intense, but doable. The programme management confirms that acquiring research funding is not an essential metric by which faculty members are evaluated. Research is thus less a source of pressure and high workload than for professors at 'traditional' universities. However, permanent teaching staff do report a high workload when actively combining research with their educational assignments. The programme management is aware of tension this combination generates, especially in the

current period of transition due to the merger. The management of the BSoG is therefore working towards a new workload framework for the teaching staff of all their programmes. The panel commends the creation of an institution-wide framework and recognises its potential as a formal tool for standardising and monitoring the teachers' workload.

The internal quality assurance of the programmes is ensured by the **Academic Quality Committee (AQC)** procedures. The circular process of quality control was rolled out in 2015, after a major reform of the internal quality assurance at Vesalius College. The programmes received positive feedback on the AQC procedures during the 2018 programme evaluation, the panel at the time indicated that it successfully contributed to the quality culture in the programmes. However, the programmes were also advised to further calibrate and optimise the AQC to increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

The AQC procedures include checks on the alignment of course objectives with the programme learning outcomes and the overall academic level. Course assignments are checked and monitored, to make sure that the students' workload remains manageable. Teaching staff are requested to submit their course grades to the AQC each semester, as to prevent grade inflation, as well as a course folder. This folder includes all their used materials (syllabus, teaching materials, the assignments and final exam questions) and a self-reflection report. The programme directors and the external examiners review these materials, with a focus on new courses and new instructors, only periodically reviewing courses that are routinely offered. The panel commends the changes made and the gains in efficiency. The AQC procedures also incorporate feedback loops from students. They are given multiple opportunities to provide feedback on their courses each semester. Graduating students are invited for an exit interview with the Vice-Dean for Education, in which they can give feedback on their programme as a whole.

The panel commends that the courses of both programmes are subject to continuous review in terms of their fit within the curriculum and relation to the learning outcomes, as well as the quality of the course material and the assessment methods used. The discussions with programme management and teaching staff showed that the process is effective most of the time, but that it creates a huge workload and responsibility for the programme directors and depends heavily on the effort of the teaching staff. However, both parties affirmed that they feel the gains outweigh the costs and are overall satisfied with the current procedures.

Discussions with stakeholders show an **open and constructive atmosphere** within the programmes. Teaching staff, supporting staff, students, representatives from the field and alumni feel they have a strong sense in commitment to the programmes. Stakeholders indicate that their relation with the programme management is one of honesty and trust, providing them with a permanent, albeit informal, platform for sharing comments on the courses and programme as a whole. The panel praises this, but would recommend the programmes to further formalise these feedback loops on the level of the programmes and imbed them structurally in the programme management processes, as well as the internal quality assurance. The panel notes that there is currently no organised and formal student representation. Students and programme management confirmed during discussions that the pandemic and the international student body had made it difficult to establish a student government in recent years. Work is currently underway to re-establish one, which should once again improve formal student representation in the programmes.

Concerning the management of the programmes, the panel remarks that many responsibilities within the programmes lie with the **programme directors**. They play a central role not only in programme management, but also in teacher recruitment, curriculum design and internal quality control. Moreover, programme directors play an important role in supporting the programmes' students. During the visit, it was confirmed that the programme directors experience a high workload. The panel recognises the importance of the programme director role and commends the qualitative, dedicated and efficient way in which these roles are fulfilled within the two programmes. The panel, however, would also like to recommend that the programme managements critically analyse the disadvantages this concentration of power might potentially pose for the programmes in the future, while also considering the impact of combining the role of programme director with other teaching, academic advisor, or management positions. Another element the panel missed in terms of management is a clear set of strategic priorities for the programmes. Vesalius College's current strategic plan is rather broad and

outdated. The panel recommends that the programmes invest in a revised strategic policy plan, with specific and detailed KPIs for both programmes.

The **information on the programmes** appears exhaustive and easily accessible on the website. This includes, but is not limited to, an overall description of the programmes and their objectives, regulations including the admission requirements, educational organisation, evaluation procedures, conditions to receive the diploma and financial aspects. In this way, the College succeeds in communicating transparently about its programmes to all who are interested. However, the panel noticed that there is limited information on quality assurance available on the website. The programmes provide a link to the accreditation report of NVAO in the Q&A, but little to no information can be found on the internal and/or external quality assurance procedures themselves. The abovementioned programmes' course catalogue, a document that encompasses more than its name would suggest, does have a paragraph on the student evaluations of teaching. The panel recommends the programmes to reassess this practice and disclose more information on the quality of the programmes as a whole. Some AQC and/or external examiner reports might be suited for publishing and of interest to the broad public, for example.

Conclusion

The panel's overall judgement on the Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship and the Bachelor in International Affairs at Vesalius College, based on the self-evaluation report and the documents submitted by the programmes and the discussions and evidence provided during the visit, is positive.

Both bachelor's programmes have a distinct and international profile, which is successfully translated into clear learning outcomes in line with international standards. The panel is impressed with the balance the programmes struck between academic and vocational skills. By having a well-qualified core of academic staff supplemented with adjunct professors, often professionals, the programmes ensure that their curricula are socially relevant and in line with the latest developments in the field. Discussions during the visit also revealed a strong sense of identity based on a set of common values shared by all stakeholders.

The programmes' emphasis in terms of their pedagogical approach (STEP) means that they put the support of each individual student at the centre of teaching and learning. Students are encouraged to take up an active role in their learning process and the relatively small size of the programmes also allows for good and often informal interactions between students and staff. Students and alumni met were very appreciative of the comprehensive formative assessment they receive during their learning process, and confirmed that their learning environment and the teaching staff provides them with optimal opportunities to achieve learning outcomes. The panel praises how this student-centredness also extends to the academic guidance and student support offered by the programmes. Students also have access to comprehensive and transparent information on all stages of study, since it is freely available in the course catalogue on the programmes' website.

The panel commends the internal quality assurance of the programmes (AQC) and the fact that the courses are subject to continuous review in terms of their fit within the curriculum and relation to the learning outcomes, as well as the quality of the course material and the assessment methods used. The programme directors in particular exercise a strong and consistent role in assuring the continuing quality of the teaching and learning process. Basic information on the quality of the programmes is made publicly available on the website.

To conclude, the panel finds that the programmes meet the review principles and thus the presence of the quality features is guaranteed. The panel therefore gives a positive final judgement and recommends further accreditation of the programmes.

Summary of the commendations

- The alliance with the Institute for European Studies under the umbrella of the Brussels School of Government is beneficial for the programmes and creates new (research) opportunities. The shared means, staff, and educational and research expertise make for a richer learning and teaching environment for staff and students.
- The expertise of and services rendered by the Office for Teaching and Learning Innovation (OTLI) contribute to the well-developed (digital) learning environment of the programmes. OTLI also played an important role in the flexibility and resilience that the programmes showed in adapting to COVID-19 and all the technological challenges it posed.
- The programmes show attention to inclusivity and offer ample (academic) support for students, which is embedded in an open and constructive atmosphere that the programmes have created for students and staff.
- The extent to which the programmes have integrated both academic and vocational skills into their courses and learning activities, as part of the STEP approach, is commendable.
- The AQC procedures and the presence of the external examiner contribute to the fact that the courses are subject to continuous review in terms of their fit with the programmes and in terms of their currency in relation to both academic approaches and real-world trends. The recent changes have made the framework more efficient and effective.
- The teaching staff has an excellent track record in terms of academic achievement and/or professional experience. The adjunct professors bring an added value to the programmes and they seem well integrated in the faculty.

Summary of the recommendations

- Develop a policy plan with clear strategic priorities for the programmes.
- Refine and focus some of the learning outcomes, specifically in relation to the bachelor's thesis. The panel encourages the programmes to develop a clear vision on the position of the thesis in the programmes.
- Maintain current student support practices, continue to monitor student welfare and step up these efforts if and when the situation demands.
- Keep monitoring the students' workload in the last semester of the programmes and look into the option of moving the Capstone course to the fifth semester.
- Raise awareness concerning feedback on final grades with students, possibly via the academic advisors.
- Appoint a neutral ombudsperson for students within the programmes.
- Analyse the role of the programme director and the many key responsibilities that the role entails, while also considering the impact of combining the role with other teaching or management positions.
- Provide a clear and detailed description of the role of academic advisor for teaching staff.
- Reflect on whether more information on the quality of the programmes should be shared with the general public, perhaps including extracts from AQC documents and/or external examiner reports.

Annexes

Annex 1: Administrative details of the programmes

Name of the institution	Vesalius College
Address, phone, e-mail, institution website	Pleinlaan 5, 1050 Brussel +32 (0)2 614 80 01 info_bsog@vub.be https://brussels-school.be/
Name of the programme (degree, qualification)	Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship Bachelor in International Affairs
Tracks	/
Level and orientation	Bachelor
(Parts of) field(s) of study	BA BUS: Business, Economics BA IA: International relations, International affairs
Language of instruction	English
The location where the programme is organised	Brussels
Study load (in ECTS)	180 ECTS

Annex 2: Short CV panel members

Jan Orbie (chair) is professor in European Union (EU) External Relations at the Department of Political Science at Ghent University (Belgium). He teaches on Theories of European Integration, Current Issues in EU Politics, EU Trade Politics, EU External Relations and Discourse Analysis in the Bachelor of Political Science and the Master EU Studies programme at the same university. His research concerns the external relations of the EU, with specific focus on external trade, development, humanitarian aid, human rights, and democracy promotion from critical and normative perspectives.

Helen Dexter is an associate professor of International Politics at the University of Leicester and a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She teaches modules that examine theories of violence, nonviolence, security, and feminism. Helen is on the editorial board of the Journal of Pacifism and Nonviolence. Her research explores the relationship between feminism, cosmopolitanism, and pacifism. She is currently interested in projects that address how global logics of violence and nonviolence are experienced in the local and everyday.

Manuela Moschella is associate professor of International Political Economy at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy. She is one of the editors of the Review of International Political Economy and associate fellow at Chatham House. She is also an associate editor of the Routledge Studies in Globalisation Series and member of the advisory boards of the Journal of European Public Policy and the International Politics. Her work has covered three main topics: central banking, financial regulation, and international and Eurozone economic governance.

Kylian Schalembier is a student Political Sciences at Ghent University. At the time of writing, he is a member of the programme commission of the political sciences programme at Ghent University. Kylian places value on both the rights & protections of students and the quality of the programmes; it is a hard balance to strike where in his opinion neither should be prioritized over the other.

Annex 3: Visit schedule

Wednesday 1 March 2023

09:30 - 11:30	2:00	Internal consultation panel
11:30 - 12:30	1:00	Interview with programme management
12:30 - 13:30	1:00	Lunch + internal consultation panel
13:30 - 14:45	1:15	Interview with students
14:45 - 15:15	0:30	Internal consultation panel
15:15 - 16:30	1:15	Interview with teaching staff
16:30 - 17:00	0:30	Internal consultation panel
17:00 - 18:00	1:00	Interview with alumni and professional field

Thursday 2 March 2023

09:00 - 10:00	1:00	Programme-specific infrastructure
10:00 - 11:00	1:00	Interview with supporting staff
11:00 - 12:00	1:00	Open consultation
12:00 - 14:00	2:00	Lunch + internal consultation panel
14:00 - 15:30	1:30	Co-creative interview with programme management
15:30 - 16:30	1:00	Final consideration + preparation oral report
16:30 - 16:45	0:15	Oral report

Annex 4: Overview of consulted documents

Self-evaluation report of the Bachelor in Global Business and Entrepreneurship (BUS) and the Bachelor in International Affairs (IA), including the following annexes, documents, and additional source material:

- Organisation chart of the Brussels School of Governance
- Mapping of course objectives and programme learning objectives
- Recommended course rotations of the Bachelor BUS
- Recommended course rotations of the Bachelor IA
- Provisional programme for a future exchange programme with the University of Warwick
- Teaching staff bio's
- AQC quality assessment course review form
- External examiner reports (from Fall 2018 until Fall 2022)
- Programme directors' AQC outcome summaries (from Fall 2018 until Fall 2022)
- List of bachelor's thesis titles (from 2018-2022)
- List of graduate programmes
- Short list of SA partners
- Some samples of bachelor's theses (with rubrics and grades)
- Data on the student body and the academic staff
- Example exam questions
- Overview of the changes in the programmes (link with recommendations of the review in 2015)
- Online learning platform for students and teaching staff (Canvas)
- Course catalogues, which include:
 - o Admission criteria
 - o Course descriptions (ECTS)
 - o Information on internships, exchange- and summer programmes
 - o The Rules and Regulations of Vesalius College
 - o Guidelines on avoiding plagiarism
 - o Information on student services and key contacts
 - o List of the teaching staff
 - o Academic calendar