Accreditation Report

Accreditation at the

German University of Technology in Oman

Study Programmes

"International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.)

"Logistics" (B.Sc.)

I. Procedure

Date of Contract: September 25th, 2017

Receipt of self-evaluation report: December 20th, 2017

Date of the on-site visit: January 28th-29th, 2018

Standing Expert Committee: Standing Expert Committee "Economics" and Standing Expert Committee "Engineering Sciences"

Attendance by the ACQUIN office: Marion Moser

Accreditation decision by the Accreditation Commission: March 27th, 2018, June 25th, 2019

Members of the expert group:

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The **Evaluation Report** of the peer group is based on the self-evaluation report of the HEI and extensive discussions with the head of the study programme, staff representatives, students and alumni.

Evaluation Criteria have been the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the "Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation" of the Accreditation Council in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national rules regulating the establishment of study programmes, has been taken into account.

Table of Contents

II.   **Introduction**

1.   **Short Profile of the German University of Technology in Oman**

The German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech) is one of seven private universities in Oman and was established in 2007 as a private independently operating university associated with RWTH (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule) Aachen; according to Omani legislation all private higher education institutions must be affiliated to an internationally renowned university to ensure the international benchmarking of the offered programmes. GUtech was established with the support of H.E. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Salmi, the Omani Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and the German Academic Exchange Service. A collaborative agreement between the Oman Educational Services LLC (OES), the owner of the university, and RWTH Aachen defines the conditions and tasks of both parties. The company OES is registered at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Oman with the purpose of running the University.

Within the Omani system of higher education GUtech competes with Oman's largest public university, Sultan Qaboos University (19.000 students), and six private universities as well as twenty private colleges.

In the first years GUtech was located at its temporary campus in Muscat. Due to growing student numbers GUtech moved to a new campus, located in Halban, in September 2012. The new campus takes into account the expected growth of the university within the next decades; the facilities built in phase I (the main academic building and the three dormitories) may accommodate up to 2.000 students, and it is planned to enlarge the facilities in such a way that about 3.000 students can be enrolled in the different study programmes at GUtech.

The university consists of four faculties: the Faculty of Business and Economics, the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, the Faculty of Mathematics and Sciences, and the Faculty of Urban Planning and Architectural Design. Additionally, GUtech has six departments: Applied Geosciences, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences, Logistic, Tourism and De-Service Management as well as Urban Planning and Design.

Nine study programmes (eight Bachelor and one Master programme) and a pre-university programme (intensive English programme and academic foundation programme) are offered. The teaching language at GUtech is English; additionally, German is taught in order to provide students with a basic knowledge facilitating the intercultural student exchange with Germany.

In order to ensure international compatibility and to allow recognition of credits according to European standards, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is used at GUtech.

Over the last years, the number of students studying at GUtech has increased up to 1.964 (2017). This increase reflects the growing reputation of GUtech as well as a high demand for its study

programmes. In 2017, the number of employees was 182 in total (72 academic and 110 administrative).

The university is a non-profit organisation but needs to cover its expenses on its own. Therefore, tuition fees are mandatory in all study programmes.

For the study programmes "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc., IBSM) and "Logistics "(B.Sc., LOG) a tuition fee of 2.700 Omani Rial (OMR) for Omanis and 3.375 OMR for non-Omanis is required.

2.   The programmes in their faculty framework

Both study programmes are offered by the Faculty of Business and Economics. Currently, 65 students are enrolled in each study programme (IBSM and LOG). The first students started in the IBSM programme in the winter term of 2015/16, the first enrolment in the LOG programme took place in the winter term of 2014/15.

The IBSM replaces the study programme "Sustainable Tourism and Regional Development" (B.Sc.), which was been established in 2009 and was closed in 2012 due to declining student numbers. Three student cohorts graduated from this programme.

III. **Exposition and Evaluation**

1. **Objectives of GUtech and the Faculty of Business and Economics**

Objectives of GUtech

GUtech's objective is to become a leading university in the Sultanate of Oman and in the Gulf region. Teaching and learning are based on research and practical experience according to the Humboldt model of higher education.

The university strives for a leading role in education, research and innovation in order to serve the society as a whole through the promotion of research and development. It wishes to contribute to the needs of Oman in terms of human resource development and capacity building in applied research. Students should be provided a state-of-the-art education to become highly qualified and socially responsible. By acquiring detailed knowledge in their disciplines, scientific-theoretical and analytical skills as well as methodological competencies they should be prepared to work in a rapidly changing and culturally-diverse professional environment. In addition, they should also develop problem-solving skills to explore innovative solutions for complex problems as well as the ability of critical and creative thinking. Students are satisfied with their study programmes and stated that they expect favourable job prospects by studying at GUtech.

Another objective of GUtech is to increase student mobility and to enable students to gain international experience, for instance by studying abroad, by realizing international field trips or by completing an internship abroad. So far, only a few students have this possibility due to the lack of study or internship placements or financial resources, among others. The application-oriented and international orientation of the programmes could be fostered by more international activities and a stronger support for students in order to facilitate experiences abroad, for instance by offering workshops on funding opportunities, as recommended by the student representatives. In this sense, the experts recommend that the university should enhance its internationalization strategy with regard to student mobility, for instance by providing study or internship opportunities abroad as well as scholarship support.

Objective of the Faculty of Business and Economics

The Faculty of Business and Economics established the Bachelor programmes "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.) and "Logistics" (B.Sc.) due to a major change in the economy of Oman. This change is characterised by higher diversification and a lessening of the dependency on the oil industry. In the future vision "Oman 2040", Oman has defined logistics and tourism as two promising key areas. With the two new study programmes the faculty acts on this development and the overall GUtech goal to offer study programmes that meet the needs of Oman industry in particular and the Gulf region in general.

Both study programmes are very attractive for students as student numbers are constantly increasing. Due to the good job opportunities and the specific Oman job market, which shows a clear demand for the graduates, further growth can be expected. In view of the currently contracted academic staff, the growing student numbers issue a challenge to the faculty as faculty staff did not increase accordingly to student numbers.

There are almost no drop-outs in both programmes, which proves a well-designed selection procedure. So far there are no graduates from both programmes; the first students will finish their studies in spring 2018. Employment opportunities seem to be quite good, considering the fact that over 70 % of the graduates of the predecessor programme in tourism ("Sustainable Tourism and Regional Development") immediately started to work after graduation. Only few students continued their education in a Master programme.

The expert group considers the overall objectives of GUtech and the Faculty of Business and Economics to be positive; they are in accordance with the relevant Omani and German regulations (e.g. Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes – resolution of the Accreditation Council, last amended on February 20th, 2013) and the respective qualification frameworks. The qualification objectives and learning outcomes of both study programmes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the qualification level of a Bachelor programme.

2. Overall Concept and Implementation of the Study Programmes

2.1. Admission requirements and recognition of qualifications / competences

The main admission requirement for the programmes is a high school degree (General Education Diploma of the Sultanate of Oman or an equivalent secondary school education) and good level of proficiency in English (IELTS score of at least 6.0 or an equivalent TOEFL score). As this requirement is not met by most Omani high school graduates, students usually enter the pre-university "Foundation Programme" ("Academic Study Skills Programme") if they have a proficiency in English with an IELTS score of at least 4.5. If this requirement is not met, the "Foundation Programme" may be preceded by a pre-foundation programme ("Core Study Skills Programme") to improve students' language skills.

The entrance test and the language courses in the "Foundation Programme" make sure that the students have sufficiently comprehensive language skills in order for them to attain an IELTS score of 6.0 or above for being able to enrol for their chosen GUtech degree programme.

Besides English language courses, also other courses are part of the "Foundation Programme", among them mathematics, information technology and creative design, which are intended to

equip students with content specific knowledge. Beside the assessment of the language proficiency, it might be considered to also integrate economic and managerial skills into the IBSM and LOG selection process for selecting students already with a focus on the objectives of both programmes.

In general, the admission requirements are adequate for both programmes, the selection procedures are well elaborated and guarantee that prospective students have acquired the relevant basic knowledge as well as professional and study skills for a successful start of their study courses.

The recognition of credits of other higher education institutions or of prior experience are regulated in the "Academic Regulations". Students coming from other schools or higher education institutions and from other programmes can have their relevant credits recognized. The procedures related to a credit transfer are described in a "Credit Transfer Policy". In order to verify the equivalence of qualifications GUtech uses the database of the German "Zentralstelle für Ausländisches Bildungswesen" as a guideline.

2.2. Personal development and capability for civic engagement

All GUtech graduates are expected to develop also general abilities, i.e. soft skills and personal competencies, in their study programmes. Students should develop ethical and social responsibility and acquire skills in self-management, critical thinking and problem solving, creative thinking, IT-competencies, individual and teamwork as well as communication skills and language skills. In the Bachelor programmes the "Life Skills Courses" (LSC), which are part of every study programme at GUtech and a kind of a trademark, promote language skills (e.g. three German language courses in the LSC are mandatory) as well as further soft skills and personal competencies.

The overall concept of the LSC and its implementation did not become clear to the peer group. There appears to be a changing course catalogue, depending on the courses offered by the four faculties. An overall concept concerning the competencies students should acquire in the LSC – besides the language skills – seems to lack. Besides this, the sustainability of the LSC courses catalogue is not clear. Therefore, the experts come to the conclusion that GUtech has to deliver a concept describing the skills to be achieved by students in the "Life Skills Courses". The concept also has to prove the sustainability of the offered courses. With regard to the module catalogue, the module descriptions of the LSC still have to be submitted.

2.3. Gender Justice and Equal Opportunities

GUtech has a non-discrimination policy, which is stated in its values: "*GUtech is committed to ethical principles in all of its undertakings. In particular, the University welcomes students and employees from both genders, all ethnic, geographical, cultural and religious backgrounds. The University encourages association in peace and with tolerance, and welcomes further intercultural exchange between Oman and Germany*"

GUtech's concepts of gender justice and equal opportunities are fully implemented in its study programmes.

Students with special needs are provided with additional services and facilities. GUtech's campus is barrier-free, when necessary, special individual examination arrangements are made. The facilities at GUtech are accessible by wheelchair. Regulations for students with special needs are defined in the "Academic Regulations".

2.4. Overall structure of the study programmes, ECTS and modularisation

Both study programmes are completely modularized. Generally modules are adequately designed. They follow the logic and regulations of the European Bologna Reform and apply the ECTS credit system. The programmes have a regular study period of eight semesters where 240 ECTS credits (which is equal to 600 Omani credits) are obtained. One ECTS credit is equivalent to 25 hours of student workload. The workload is appropriate and almost evenly distributed over the semesters. Modules have generally a size of five ECTS-credits, there are only a few modules with less than five ECTS credits, reflecting their workload and content.

In both study programmes students have to complete five LSC with 24 ECTS-credits in total. Here students should achieve a German language proficiency at level A1 in order to be prepared for a stay in Germany. It might be considered to raise the level to B1 in order to facilitate the abroad experience of students.

A mandatory internship during the 6th semester, lasting 12 weeks, is credited with 15 ECTS credits for self-organised work in a company, a report and a presentation on the conducted work. The intended learning goals are defined in a well-elaborated internship handbook. The internship should provide students with insight into practical work and should also provide them the opportunity to get in contact with future employers.

The Bachelor thesis (12 ECTS credits plus 3 ECTS credits for the colloquium) is written in the last semester.

Teaching methods

The used forms of teaching are standard and comprise lectures and tutorials in a balanced ratio of two hours in class and one to two hours of exercise/tutorials, supplemented by students' self-learning. Some modules integrate specific, innovative didactical methods, for instance case studies, problem and project based learning, simulation and business games (in LOG), or workshops, field trips, industry and site visits, project work and practical software training (in IBSM). Although the use of innovative and modern ways of teaching apparently depends on teaching staff, students are predominantly satisfied, and the experts got the impression of a good mixture of teaching methods being applied in both study programmes. The teaching methods are adequate with regard to the qualification objectives and the content of the modules. To avoid contingencies in

applying innovative and attractive forms of teaching, the faculty is encouraged to define some mandatory teaching forms which should be used in the courses and documented in the module descriptions.

2.5. Documentation and transparency, student support

The study programmes in general as well as the course of study, the examination requirements and the admission requirements in particular are well documented and accessible to students and the public. Students are regularly invited to attend information events and workshops on a variety of themes such as coping with stress, long-term studies, etc. For example, all students attend an "Orientation Day" when joining the university where they are informed about important policies and rules to be complied with on campus just as dress codes, ethical academic behaviour (e.g. with regard to plagiarism), classroom behaviour, library regulations.

In this sense, students get the necessary support for their studies in general. In addition, GUtech established a "Writing Centre" in 2013 where students can get advice on writing reports and theses.

Overall, the expert group considers GUtech to have a considerable level of transparency. The documentation of all information necessary for the students is well done. For students a well-elaborated module handbook is available which provides information on learning outcomes, workload, syllabus, recommended literature, among others. There is only a certain lack of information concerning the assessment forms; these have to be listed completely in the module descriptions.

The expert group also met student representatives of both study programmes. The experts got the impression that students receive very good support from GUtech. The Registry and Students Admissions Department provides services on matters related to eligibility, entry requirements, general programme structure etc. Questions related to the study programmes are answered by academic advisors of the faculty.

The students emphasized the good support by GUtech and the lecturers in finding internship placements or even first employment contracts. A career corner was established at GUtech in order to better embrace the demands of the private business sector and also to build a bridge between scientific education and the demands of the employment market. It supports students in career management issues, organizes career fairs and weeks as well as workshops to provide tools and techniques that students can utilize when searching for jobs after graduation. It might be figured out whether the career corner could support the GUtech as well as the students to also manage internship and job offers by companies. Also internship reports, internship and job recommendations from other students/alumni might be offered in the career corner through a database.

According to the peers, the student support services at GUtech are well organised and adequate. Faculty staff members are highly committed in student support and counselling.

2.6. Examinations

GUtech has an "Assessment and Examination Policy" which clearly describes the examination system in general, the tasks of the examiners and the principles of assessment as well as possible forms of assessment and examination procedures.

In particular, the "Assessment and Examination Policy" regulates that

- assessment tasks have to be adjusted to learning outcomes and be described clearly,

- assessments are valid and reliable,

- assessments are fair and transparent and

- students receive timely and constructive feedback.

The overall organisation of the examinations follows common university standards. The examination regulations were subjected to legal verification.

A board of examiners evaluates whether the planning and execution of examinations is in accordance with the "Academic Regulations" and the "Assessment and Examination Policy" and provides corresponding feedback to the dean of the faculty.

The board of examiners is assembled according to common German standards and comprises the dean, the vice-rector for teaching as well as up to four professors and up to two student representatives. Examiners and co-examiners must hold an academic qualification that is equivalent or higher than a Bachelor degree, and must have been obtained in a field that is relevant to the subject being examined. Furthermore, examiners must have taught the subject being examined in the academic year preceding the examination. Responsibilities of the co-examiners include checking draft examination papers and documentation for other assessment tasks and confirming the accuracy of final marks.

The invigilation procedure (G32) is rather personal and intensive. ("Never less than 2 invigilators per room. If more than 30 students, at least three invigilators. If more than 45 students, at least four invigilators."). According to the experts, two invigilators per room seem to be sufficient.

For handicapped students individual solutions are found for the examination procedures. Special examination arrangements are made in individual cases. Since the study programmes only started some years ago, no handicapped students happened to study at the faculty. Compensations are ensured for handicapped students with regard to the final performance tests and those during the studies in the "Assessment and Examination Policy". The expert group suggests to add also a

suitable paragraph in the invigilation procedure (G32) about how to deal with handicapped students at exams: whom they can contact for finding a fair compensation for disadvantages and how longer examination times can be realized.

In the "Academic Regulations" three forms of assessments are defined, which are used with a sufficient variety in the study programmes IBSM and LOG. These are:

- written examinations

- oral examinations and

- other type of examinations.

The forms of assessment and weighting as well as the requirements to pass the courses are outlined in detail in the module descriptions. Within both study programmes a broad range of assessment forms is used, e.g. written and oral examinations, graded homework, project work, presentations, quizzes. Lecturers are free to choose modes of examination.

Most modules are completed with one final exam to assess the theoretical and practical knowledge of the students (summative assessment). The examinations are module-related as well as knowledge and competence oriented. Besides this, continuous assessment (formative assessment) and other forms of assessments are used throughout the semester, for instance to ensure that the students develop and enhance relevant skills and that they obtain a permanent feedback on their performance. The quizzes, homework and small tests during the semesters allow them to receive feedback on their knowledge and prepare them for the module examinations. Furthermore, this quantity of assignments combined with the final examination assures a competence oriented examination system with a broad variation of examinations. The definition of the assessment forms is quite broad. To increase the transparency of the examination procedures a more detailed definition of the various forms of assessment should be developed and also communicated to the students. A certain variety of examination forms might also be defined for specific modules; at the same time, it might be considered to implement a more adequate balance of ongoing testing and final module exams.

Against the background of the objectives of both study programmes, the various examination formats are useful and adequate to measure the performance (outcome orientation) of students. Students are in general satisfied with the examination practice. During the on-site-visit they corroborated that grading schemes are transparent. In cases of doubt, students have the opportunity to send an appeal and are heard, there is also a grade appeal procedure. Nevertheless, it might be considered to increase the transparency of this procedure (e.g. transparent feedback of the result) and to institutionalise the way of checking exams.

In order to qualify for graduation, students must have achieved a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 1.5 (equivalent to letter grade C- and percentage grade 60%). Students graduating with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher are awarded a degree with Honours (First Class). Students graduating with a cumulative GPA between 2.5 and 3.4 are awarded a degree with Honours (Second Class).

2.7. Resources, organisation, decision making processes

<u>Human resources, financial resources and infrastructural resources</u>

GUtech offers an attractive campus with a state-of-the-art infrastructure, though it currently lacks to a certain extent the functionality needed for the growing amount of students. The well-equipped lecture rooms can hardly cater for the demand of student groups larger than 50; larger lecture halls exist, though in very limited numbers. Therefore, they will hardly satisfy the upcoming demand of constantly growing student intakes. The bright and gracious library offers access to a wide range of electronic resources and a large amount of copies of the used text books, while the choice of scientific literature could be a bit broader. The basic infrastructure to support students self-studying activities exists, while designated workspace for group-works, brainstorming sessions or individual work spaces, including access to IT-infrastructure such as scanners, printers etc. could still be improved. A stronger integration of the well-equipped IT-labs and the existing workspace for students might be an interesting option for the future.

As opposed to the infrastructural resources, the human resources seem to pose a challenge. Currently, the existing human resources in the department do not fully meet the demand. Especially in the IBSM the staff situation should be improved quickly. The promised employment of two more faculty members in the department can only be seen as a short-term remedy, while a clear increase of faculty members – especially with an adequate expertise in the field of tourism and management studies – is strongly recommended. As student numbers are constantly growing, the need for ongoing guidance and individual support – for instance for thesis supervision – can only be satisfied with an increased number of staff in the department; especially due to the growth rate of both programmes at the same time. Beside the improvement of the staff situation it should also be considered to limit student numbers being enrolled taking into account staff capacities. In light of the limited amount of highly qualified staff in the Gulf region and the teaching excellence that GUtech aims at, as indicated by existing faculty and selection criteria, the human resources management becomes even more challenging. The still applied approach of utilizing fly-in-professors can only be a short-term solution, as such strategies do not contribute to the overall development of a department and at the same time create ongoing organisational problems and increased workload through intensive classes and block courses for the students; this was also confirmed by the student representatives. As a first step, according to the plans of the department, fly-ins (at the moment mainly from Germany) or drive-ins should be limited to two courses per

semester for reducing in future organisational burden of staff members and intensive workload of students. For the support in organisational tasks the department has generally four interns which act as tutors for special courses (e.g. "Mathematics" or for field trips) during teaching periods.

All lecturers are very well qualified and highly dedicated to teaching and student support as well as to the coordination of the study programmes. This causes a high workload, and time for research becomes very limited. Therefore the experts recommend to reduce at least the administrative burden of the teaching staff in order to enable them to conduct scientific research to a greater extent. More research – for instance in cooperation with Omani companies – would also promote the cooperation with the labour market. Therefore, an additional position for managing the study programmes (e.g. a study programme coordinator) should be allocated.

In close relation to the issue of human resources, the financial situation has to be evaluated, too. While both faculty members and student representatives emphasized the role of site and company visits, excursions or field trips abroad, students formulated their hope for more financial resources on the department level. Keeping in mind that both degrees are closely related to the respective industries and are also tied to international and intercultural experiences, an increased access of students to international field trips or study abroad programmes through funding programmes of the university might facilitate an even more international experience of the students.

The experts got a positive impression from the e-learning platform which provides students with all kinds of teaching material. The platform is comparable with similar internationally used products, even though GUtech does not yet fully use the entire spectrum of the platform or blended learning activities in general. The implementation of a blended learning concept might improve traditional ways of teaching and could even help to deal in a better way with limited staff capacities.

Organization, cooperation

GUtech has an adequate organisational structure including the Rectorate, the Academic Board and the Academic Committee on the central level. On the faculty level a Faculty Board, a Departments Board and a Department Curriculum Committee exist, and on programme level a Board of Examiners and an External Advisory Committee were established. The heads of the study programmes are responsible for the organisation of the study programmes. A newly established External Advisory Committee advises the department in all matters concerning industry needs for graduates for the study programmes. In regular staff meetings (including fly-ins) matters concerning the organization and the content of courses are discussed. Due to the small size of the department many issues are discussed in informal meetings. Students appreciate the open door policy where complaints or problems can be discussed directly with the lecturers.

The framework for the cooperation between GUtech and RWTH Aachen is established through an affiliation agreement. RWTH Aachen supports GUtech in the design and implementation of new study programmes and supports GUtech in the implementation of its quality management system. In addition, RWTH Aachen provides laboratory places and study places for visiting students, academic staff of RWTH Aachen teaches as fly-ins in both programmes. The department also cooperates with other German higher education institutions, for instance the University of Applied Sciences Munich, the University of Bremen or – outside of Germany – with University of Zagreb.

3. Specific Objectives and Concept of the Programme "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.)

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the study programme "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.) with its rigorous academic approach is to prepare students for the national and international job market in international business and service management, both in industry and academia. The programme is particularly designed to meet the broad requirements of today's service industry in Oman, combining classical business administration as well as management subjects with more specific courses on tourism operations, tourism planning and destination development and management. Therefore, the programme allows students to enter the job market with a rather broad qualification portfolio, ensuring a high employability in various fields of businesses. The programme is characterised by a broad approach based on interdisciplinary thinking and includes methodological as well as self-development related courses helping to support the individual personal development of the students. Besides acquiring comprehensive knowledge of theoretical concepts, students should also be able to apply a diverse range of quantitative and qualitative methods. Language skills as well as intercultural competences are fostered through study trips and international guest lectures, while designated course work on intercultural communication or intercultural management might be a further enrichment for the future. The opportunity for students to choose from several electives allows an individual development process. Furthermore the ongoing "Omanization-policy" ensures an ongoing demand on the labour market for Omani nationals and good job opportunities.

3.2. Structure of the study programme

The "International Business & Service Management" (B.Sc.) is a full-time programme. It consists of 43 modules (without internship and Bachelor thesis). Almost all modules are compulsory; students can choose four elective modules out of a catalogue of eight (four IBSM electives and four LOG electives).

As the programme aims at a broad business qualification, there is a wide range of topics integrated, such as management, business administration, marketing, tourism operations and development, etc. Marketing seems to be restricted to a single module.

The broadness of the study programme does not necessarily facilitate a congruent and sequential structure. Some courses and modules might be clustered and re-arranged; this refers for instance to the courses "Tourism Planning and Development I", "Tourism Planning and Development II" and the course "International Destination Management". It seems to be adequate to finish the "Tourism Planning and Development" courses before addressing "International Destination Management". Following the presented programme logic to provide students with an overview of the fields of tourism operations before addressing more strategic subjects, a stronger focus on these issues during the first semesters might be an interesting option as well, while very specific courses or such courses providing an outlook for further needs might be rather concentrated at the end of the programme (e.g. "Culture and Heritage Tourism" or "Tourism and Technology"). The opportunity to choose electives is definitely a positive aspect of the programme; however, recommendations on which electives could usefully be combined in order to deepen the understanding of certain fields might be developed. One might even think of certain concentrations based on a fixed combination of electives, which might enhance the transparency of the programme.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial for the students to offer them a focus on certain topics of tourism and offering them also the possibility to focus on other fields of international business and service management, rather than limiting the focus on tourism. This would be helpful, particularly in view of the Master's degree courses planned for the future at GUtech, but also offering IBSM graduates an academic career at other universities, offering Master programmes in the field of broader Service Management and International Business.

GUtech might also consider making greater use of the synergies between the two programmes IBSM and LOG and to increase the number of electives. For example, courses on logistics could be electives in IBSM, e.g. by focussing on supply chain management in tourism operations or logistic management for airlines and cruise companies. GUtech should also figure out whether further synergies between faculties (e.g. sharing modules) could be created. The university should also consider implementing trajectories of elective courses in both programmes.

It might be also considered to offer some specializing courses in specific fields of tourism (e.g. hospitality management, destination management, HPMS-systems, GDS-systems, SPA, incoming tourism etc.). This would give students the opportunity to broaden their knowledge on the one hand but also to create an individual qualification profile through e.g. course specializations. It might also be interesting to give students the opportunity to become familiar with most popular tourism software programs (like HPMS, GDS, etc.), which could be implemented in specializing

modules on specific fields of tourism starting in semester four. Most companies offer their software products for free if they are integrated in lectures at universities.

Special tourism issues such as hospitality management, incoming agencies and other domestic tourism service providers (e.g. rental cars, traditional/local markets, multilingual guides, national parks, spas, resorts) could become more important due to the increasing tourism sector of the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, it should be considered to carry out a market analysis or market observation with special emphasis on the above mentioned aspects and, according to the results, to consider integrating these new developments in tourism into the IBSM programme.

In line with the aim to create a solid methodological base for the students, various courses focusing on methodological skills are implemented in a logic sequence leading to the thesis project. Nevertheless, an earlier provision of courses such as applied economics might fit better in the sequence of courses.

The programme includes several didactic concepts such as field trips, workshops and lectures while also stressing the applied character of the programme through the compulsory internship. The internship guidelines and regulations in alignment with the descriptions of the student representatives are helpful and well structured. Students seem not to have problems in acquiring internship positions at the moment, as the concept of internships is becoming increasingly prominent in Oman and several companies already have introduced adequate programmes. The department supports students as well as companies offering internships by guiding and suggesting "job-shadowing" opportunities. Nevertheless, the significant increase in student numbers might also lead to an undesirable reduction in supervision, individual support and guidance. Therefore, a strategy might be deployed to handle further growth and to ensure an adequate amount of internships on a national but also international base. Individual solutions might be replaced by more standardized procedures (e.g. implementing an online database to share student experiences with specific internship providers).

3.3. Conclusion

The experts consider the "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.) at GUtech to be an attractive degree programme for students aiming at a career in the national service industry of Oman. The programme addresses a broad field of competences by implementing a wide range of didactic concepts, while also supporting individual students' development through the integration of various methodological as well as self-development oriented subjects. Despite these positive aspects, the programme lacks to a certain extent clarity and transparency, for instance with regard to the role and content of the LCS, the sequence of classes, and the clarification of the interrelation of course content through the consequent implementation of modules bringing together relevant individual courses. Currently the department seems to be only to a minor degree prepared for the increase in student numbers. A clear increase of human resources as well as a

strategic implementation of internal process is strongly recommended in order to secure the high standards being delivered in the past.

As well as the department, supporting services such as the International office or administrative bodies have to be prepared for the increased amount of students. Identifying existing synergies between the programmes offered within the department and strategical collaboration might further increase the attractiveness of both offered programmes. Instead of only offering courses of one programme as elective for the other, strategic fields might be addressed, e.g. logistic-process for tourism companies with in the LOG or supply chain management aspects in tourism operations within the IBSM.

4. Specific Objectives and Concept of the Programme "Logistics" (B.Sc.)

4.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the study programme "Logistics" (B.Sc.) with its rigorous academic approach is to prepare the students for the national and international job market in logistics, both in industry and academia. The faculty introduced the programme also in response to the expected labour market needs in the Sultanate of Oman, offering various specialisations in the wider area of business and economics. In addition to the specialised knowledge in logistics, transportation and supply chain management, the B.Sc. in "Logistics" aims at equipping students with important transferrable skills such as information technology, languages, numerical skills, critical thinking and intercultural communication.

The students should obtain knowledge on business methods and theories and understanding of logistics. Their methodological competencies are ensured by a quantitative orientation, supported by computer skills. Generic competencies comprise thinking in logistics contexts and management as well as entrepreneurial skills. This is guaranteed by intensive support. Given the significantly increasing number of students, the current staffing levels may not be sufficient in the future.

Since logistics should be conceived as a cross-sectional task, it is adequate to integrate specific issues of operational and strategic logistics into a general business economics study programme. This can be also underlined against the background that the evaluated programme has a strong focus on management and logistics. Consequently, technical dimensions of logistics are covered to a lesser extent, although this might not be expected at a University of Technology. However, the argumentation of the university to follow the mission of a classical university with a comprehensive portfolio of degree programmes is convincing.

In terms of visibility and attractiveness of the study programme, it might be helpful to change the title of the programme into "Logistics Management", in order to reflect the focus of the programme in a better way. Another alternative could be the integration of a technical profile into the programme, especially to justify the intended employability in the sector of logistics engineering.

The qualification objectives of the study programme are valid and formulated in a clear way. The experts got a very positive impression of the programme. The objectives are in accordance with the German and Omani qualification framework and students acquire adequate general as well as specialised knowledge in the area of "Logistics" which will offer them good job opportunities in this growing sector in Oman.

4.2. Structure of the study programme

The degree programme "Logistics" (B.Sc.) has a regular duration of eight semesters, where students acquire 240 ECTS credits, which are rather homogeneously distributed over the entire period of studying. The workload of 29 to 32 ECTS credits per semester seems to be balanced.

The degree programme is structured in basic (economic) modules amounting to 116 ECTS credits, specific modules in the field of logistics (55 ECTS credits) and electives (maximum 15 ECTS credits), which are either closely linked to logistics or cover methodological competences. Content related modules are supplemented by (German) language courses (12 ECTS credits), "Life Skill Courses" (12 ECTS credits), an internship (15 ECTS credits) and the Bachelor thesis with a colloquium (15 ECTS credits).

Students can either choose logistic modules or interdisciplinary modules on scientific methods from the pool of elective modules. Depending on their individual choices, elective components comprise up to 15 ECTS credits of logistic competences or – to the other extreme – none.

Taken for granted that the Bachelor thesis is devoted to a topic in the field of logistics, the entire study programme addresses logistics with at least 70 ECTS credits. This justifies the title "Logistics" of a degree programme in the sphere of business economics.

From the experts' perspective, the general structure of the programme, which is divided into a basic section (semester one to four) and an advanced section (semesters five to eight), is reasonable. Each section comprises two levels (level one and two in the basic section and level three and four in the advanced section). The curricular structure with the progressive acquisition of knowledge and competences is transparent and comprehensive.

While the first four semesters concentrate on methodological and subject related issues, competences are strengthened and widened in the following semesters through specific courses in logistics. Students are enabled to deal with complex problems of business logistics and have the opportunity to acquire practical skills during the internship.

The experts would like to draw attention to the module "Logistics Management" in the first semester. Since the module shall cover general aspects of logistics, but at the same time specific contents of management and logistics (e.g. supply chain management), a modification might be considered. Either a module in the first semester might focus on more general aspects of the discipline and be renamed as "Introduction into Logistics", or the focus of the module "Logistics Management" with more specific content might be relocated to a higher semester.

In general, the provided modules on logistics mainly address procedural (flow-orientation) or functional aspects (function-orientation) of logistics, which is reasonable – even if mixed – for the purpose of the study programme. However, it is crucial to cover both dimensions in basic modules during the first semesters. Currently, the strand of flow-oriented logistics is lacking – at least as

visible courses – relevant phases, such as supply and disposal logistics. Although some of the mentioned aspects could be highlighted in a better way, the fundamentals of logistics are sufficiently reflected in the study programme.

Whereas general aspects of logistics are well defined, legal issues are hardly integrated into the assessed programme. Therefore, it should be considered to integrate fundamentals of international regulation on modes of transport into existing modules on transportation. Further, the module "Business Law" might be enriched with topics of logistics; alternatively, a new module on "Logistics Law" could be created.

Regarding electives, the experts come to the conclusion that the composition of modules is adequate for the national strategy "Oman 2040". In this way, the study programme shows a strong commitment to national requirements and the demand of the regional labour market with companies in the fields "Airport/Aircargo", "Maritime Logistics" or "Automotive". At the same time elective modules in "Railway Logistics" have been discarded due to the fact that the Sultanate Oman is not fostering any rail-based transportation.

Despite of the self-evident focus on the region, logistics is an internationally driven subject, and a study programme has to cover various issues of the regions and labour markets of the world. Therefore, rail-based transportation systems and railway logistics, which are already established in neighbour regions of Oman, should not be neglected.

Besides the subject related competences, soft skills and aspects of the individual development are well integrated in the curriculum and fostered by team projects within the "Life Skill Courses".

As a general finding, the experts appreciate the sound structure of the degree programme with its thorough and transparent modularization, the convincing workload calculation (30 ECTS credits or 750 hours of work per semester), and the comprehensive documentation. Only the references on literature in some module descriptions might be updated.

The experts strongly support the proposal of the programme managers to offer an additional – though voluntary – two-day job shadowing programme, which already exists in the study programme IBSM.

With the aim to familiarize students with practical work, the university not only integrates the internship into the curriculum, but also organizes (local) excursions and provides opportunities to study abroad. Especially academic mobility is appreciated a lot by students, since it helps to develop intercultural competences. The experts are convinced that these additional activities can be managed with a (still) small number of students, but there are doubts whether financial resources and staff capacities will allow similar services for an increasing number of students.

In sum, the practical components of the study programme are sufficient and provide an added value to the programme. Students are well prepared for the requirements of the labour market in logistics and improve their individual employability.

4.3. Conclusion

The study programme "Logistics" (B.Sc.) has a well-defined and logical structure, it ensures a step-by-step deepening and enhancement of relevant knowledge in the curriculum. The offered courses and the teaching methods are of high quality. The objectives of the programme are valid, the curriculum is appropriately designed for the achievement of the defined qualification objectives. The programme offers a good qualification for the entry into the labour market as well as an adequate preparation for a continuing Master programme.

5. Quality Management

GUtech is developing a holistic quality management system with the support of RWTH Aachen. Quality development and quality assurance are integrated in all activities of GUtech. Within GUtech; the Quality Assurance and Planning Unit supports the faculties in their quality management measures.

GUtech has implemented the following tools:

- student course evaluations (online/ paper-based)

Course evaluations are carried out regularly in the middle and the end of the semester. The student course evaluations were formerly conducted by the EvaSys programme but this has been replaced by a newly developed system of GUtech. Evaluation results are accessible to the head of the department and the respective lecturers and discussed in the department meetings where necessary measures are defined, too.

In general, students are satisfied with the quality management mechanisms and describe the study programmes to be continuously improving. They reported being informed about improvements according to the evaluation results, but they also mentioned that the evaluation of block courses should take place earlier during the semester so that changes can still be implemented in the running semester.

Students are in close contact with the teaching staff. Thus, occurring problems are directly addressed. There is also a formalized complaints and grievance procedure. In case of students' complaints, GUtech should inform students better about the further process, steps and results. The reviewers got the impression that this not always takes place in a transparent manner.

- Department Curriculum Committee

Course contents are developed by the Department Curriculum Committee in close cooperation with RWTH Aachen. In the future, the new established External Advisory Board shall also be integrated in the development of the courses. The committee monitors and reviews the study programmes at least every two years. The committee's report and recommendations for curriculum changes are presented to the Departmental Board for approval. Only minor changes are possible, major changes need the approval of the Ministry of Higher Education.

- academic advisors

The academic advisors are the first persons whom students contact in case of requests. They keep also track of the performance of students and guide them through their programme of study.

- teaching staff performance evaluation

Besides course evaluations, there is also once per year an academic staff evaluation and monitoring. In an annual meeting development objectives are specified and staff is assessed against these objectives. According to the self-evaluation report, this might also influence the salary increases and promotions. In the staff performance evaluation the currently high workload of teaching staff should be considered and solutions for reducing the workload should be found. Research is expected to be carried out by the department's staff, therefore overloading staff members with teaching and administrative duties should be avoided.

- alumni surveys

Alumni ought to have a strong connection to GUtech and give feedback about their study programmes especially with regard to the demands of the labour market. Both study programmes are relatively new, and the first graduates are expected for 2018. The department is already in close contact with the graduates of the "Sustainable Tourism and Regional Development" programme and gets therefore direct feedback from graduates, which provides valuable information on the demands of the job market It is planned to also establish close connections to the alumni of IBSM and LOG. On the central level of GUtech, the Alumni Unit of the Students Affairs Office is responsible for carrying out alumni surveys and for organizing alumni days/campus events.

With respect to the demands of the labour market GUtech should carry out periodically a labour market analysis in the logistic and tourism sector for monitoring the actual developments to offer students an attractive state-of-the-art education. For example, the area of hospitality management could be increasing in the tourism sector, and it might be future-oriented to strengthen this part in the IBSM.

In summary, the experts found a quality management system at the GUtech, which covers the main aspects of higher education quality management systems. The implemented measures are appropriate to ensure and improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as to optimize study conditions.

6.   Summary and evaluation according to the "Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation" (08.12.2009, version of 20.20.2013) of the Accreditation Council (AC) and the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) in the actual official version

The peer group received a very good impression of both study programmes. Both programmes offer a solid education, the qualification objectives are clearly defined and valid. In general both curricula are designed appropriately. It should be considered to re-structure the IBSM programme, because the broadness of the programme does not necessarily facilitate a congruent and sequential structure. For both programmes it might also be considered to increase the number of electives to offer students also an area of specialization. This could be implemented by a stronger use of synergies between both programmes and between faculties. Due to the unexpected high demand for both study programmes and therefore increasing student numbers, the human resources, in particular in the area of management and tourism studies, should be increased quickly. All staff members show a very high commitment to the programmes and the support of students with contributes to the success of the programmes.

The peer group would like to thank GUtech and the faculty for the open and constructive discussions as well as for the possibility to take a comprehensive look into the university.

Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation" of the Accreditation Council:

The Criteria 1 ''Qualification Objectives of the Study Programme Concept'', 2 ''Conceptual Integration of the Study Programme in the System of Studies'', 3 ''Study Programme Concept'', 4 ''Academic Feasibility'', 5 ''Examination System'', 6 ''Programme-related Co-operations'', 7 ''Facilities'', 9 ''Quality Assurance and Further Development'', 11 ''Study Programmes with a Special Profile Demand'' are fulfilled. The Criterion 8 ''Transparency and Documentation'' is not fully implemented as the total module description lack a certain degree of clarity.

Conditions:

1. The module handbooks have to be revised with regard to the following aspects:
   o The assessment forms have to be listed completely in the module descriptions
   o Module descriptions of the "Life Skills Courses" have to be submitted
2. GUtech has to deliver a concept describing the skills to be achieved by students in the "Life Skills Courses"; the concept has to prove the sustainability of the offered courses.

Criteria 10 "Study Programmes with a Special Profile Demand" is not applicable

"Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area"

The programmes have been also assessed on the basis of the *"Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG).* The reviewers come to the conclusion that the standards 1.1 (Policy for quality assurance), 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes), 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment), 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification), 1.5 (Teaching staff), 1.6 (Learning resources and student support), 1.7 (Information management), 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and 1.10 (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled. 1.8 (Public information) is partly fulfilled (see also AC criterion 8)

7. Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission

The expert group proposes an accreditation of both study programmes with the following **conditions and recommendations**:

Conditions for the study programme "Logistic" (B.Sc.) and the study programme "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.):

1. The module handbooks have to be revised with regard to the following aspects:
   - o The assessment forms have to be listed completely in the module descriptions
   - o Module descriptions of the "Life Skills Courses" have to be submitted
2. GUtech has to deliver a concept describing the skills to be achieved by students in the "Life Skills Courses"; the concept has to prove the sustainability of the offered courses.

IV. Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

1. Accreditation Decision

Based on the peer report, the statement of the university and the statement of the standing expert committee the accreditation commission took on September 29th, 2018 the following decisions:

The study programmes are accredited with the following general condition:

General Condition

- **GUtech has to deliver a concept describing the skills to be achieved by students in the „Life Skills Courses"; the concept hast o prove the sustainability of the offered courses.**

International Business and Service Management (B.Sc.)

The study programme „International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.) is accredited without further conditions.

The accreditation is valid until 30. September 2019.

The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the conditions by 24 January 2019. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the conditions are fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30. September 2023. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the conditions in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.

The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 24 May 2018.

Logistics (B.Sc.)

The study programme „Logistics" (B.Sc.) is accredited without further conditions.

The accreditation is valid until 30. September 2019.

The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the conditions by 24 January 2019. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the conditions are fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30. September 2023. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the conditions in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.

The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 24 May 2018.

The following recommendations are given for the further development of both study programmes:

- The human resources, especially with an adequate expertise in the field of tourism and management studies, should be increased. The number of students being enrolled should be limited and should be adapted to the human resources.

- The administrative burden of teaching staff should be reduced in order to enable them to conduct scientific research to a greater extent. An additional position for managing the study programs (e.g. a study programme coordinator) should be allocated.

- The number of electives should be increased. GUtech should figure out, whether synergies of collaboration between faculties (e.g. sharing modules) could be created. The university should try to implement trajectories of elective courses.

The decision of the Accreditation Commission does not comply with the assessment by the expert group in the following points:

Withdrawal of conditions

- The module handbooks have to be revised with regard to the following aspects: The assessment forms have to be listed completely in the module descriptions; Module descriptions of the "Life Skills Courses" have to be submitted.

Statement:

GUtech has submitted revised module descriptions, including module descriptions of the „Life Skills Courses" and detailed descriptions of the assessment forms.

2. Fulfilment of conditions

Based on the statement of the Standing Expert Committees, the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN took on June 25th, 2019 the following decisions:

The condition of the Bachelor programme "Logistics" (B.Sc.) is fulfilled. The accreditation period is extended until September 30th, 2023.

The condition of the Bachelor programme "International Business and Service Management" (B.Sc.) is fulfilled. The accreditation period is extended until September 30th, 2023.