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ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS OF PA TEACHING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR PRACTICE - University of Economics in Bratislava, Faculty of National Economy

**The analysis of practical relevance of programme competencies
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report Assessment of Methodology and Materials of Public Administration (PA) Teaching and its Relevance for Practice is to provide data in order to analyse how the PA curricula is linked to practice, and identification of the gap between competencies needed in practical work in public administration and those obtained in the educational programmes

In case of the Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics in Bratislava, two study programmes are subject of the research – bachelor's study programme Public Administration and Regional Development and master's study programme Public Administration and Regional Development. Both analysed study programmes have been nationally accredited within the study field Public Administration and Regional Development (last accreditation in 2014 and in effect from 2015). Study programmes have not been so far accredited by the EAPAA.

Each part of the report analyses both study programmes at the same time. In the first part of the report, the authors describe the study programmes and define the competencies of graduates at bachelor and postgraduates at master level. The dominant part of the report presents the research results about the assessment of graduates' and postgraduates' competences from the alumni as well as from employers' point of view. The last part of the report summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the study programmes and defines the challenges for their future development.

1.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Public Administration and Regional Development (one of the departments of the Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics in Bratislava) specialises in teaching theoretical and practical problems in the area of public administration and regional development, and in particular, it deals with issues of territorial public administration, regional economics and politics, urban development, regional analysis, environmental policy, economic geography, urban marketing and management and creation projects for regional and local development and policy analysis.

The scientific and research activities of the department contributed to the development of science in the field of regional economics and regional policy and deals with the theory of organization and performance of public administration and the practice of state administration institutions. The department is responsible for all three levels of its only study programme Public Administration and Regional Development. The department initiated the founding of the civic association Society for Regional Science and Policy, which is an association of academics and practitioners in the field of regional development in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic. The Society is a representative of the Slovak section of the European Regional Science Association (ERSA). Its main activities include the annual organization of the Winter Science Regional Seminar and the co-organization of the Central European Conference in Regional Science.

Following the socio-political changes in 1989 and the transformation of the Slovak economy, including the regional economy and development, on 1 July 1990, the Department of Spatial Economics and Regional Geography was created. It consisted of teachers from the Department of Macroeconomic Strategy, who provided teaching of spatial economics and regional development and teachers of the Department of Geography and History of National Economy oriented to economic geography. In 1991, the department was part of the

Department of Economic Policy as its section. Since March 1992, this department has been transformed into the Department of Regional Economics, Geography and Environmental Economics. At the beginning of 1997, the department's name was changed to the Department of Regional Development and Geography.

An important milestone in the development of the department was the accreditation and establishment of the study field Public Administration and Regional Development. This completed an important stage in the formation of the department, in the education of bachelors, engineers and doctoral students specialized in the subject of study. At the same time, the department harmonized its name with the name of the field of study and since 2002 it has been named the Department of Public Administration and Regional Development.

In the pre-accession period and after the accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union, the importance of regional policy increased sharply, and the department significantly contributed not only to the preparation of university specialists, but also to activities affecting the regional development of the Slovak Republic (National Development Plan 2004-06, Special Preparatory Programme for Structural Funds, National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-13 and its ex-ante evaluation, Vision and Strategy of Regional and Territorial Development of the Slovak Republic, etc.). The Department also participated in the processes associated with decentralization of public administration, creation, operation and financing of self-governing territorial units.

In connection with the above-mentioned changes, the department significantly strengthened education of its own PhD students, which resulted in a substantial rejuvenation of the department. At the same time, the number of members of the department grew along with the growing role in the education of new generations of graduates, the growing interest in studying this field of study, participation in international projects, and the organization of a professional community across Slovakia. This triggered the need for a new structure. Therefore, in 2007 a new internal organization structure of the Department was created, which currently consists of three sections:

- Regional Economics and Policy Section
- Public Administration Section
- Geography Section

The following table shows the development of the department in terms of the number of departmental staff.

Table 1 Number of departmental staff

Staff	1995	1998	2006	2007	2008	2010	2012	2016	2019
professors	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2
Associate professors	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	2
Research assistants (with PhD., or CSc.)	-	-	3	3	4	5	6	4	6
Research assistants	-	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Assistants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Together	7	8	10	10	10	12	12	12	10

1.2 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

In this section, the authors will describe both the bachelor's and the master's study programme in terms of enrolment figures, programme structure (i.e. courses taught). The following table shows enrolment figures since 2013/2014 academic year.

Table 2 Number of enrolled students in the full-time study programme*

	Bachelor's study programme			Master's study programme		PhD study programme		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
2018/2019	10	5	0	23	41	1	0	1
2017/2018	12	0	7	36	25	0	2	1
2016/2017	0	8	12	19	24	2	1	1
2015/2016	9	11	17	20	20	1	1	3
2014/2015	18	13	20	16	37	1	2	3
2013/2014	17	19	34	35	38	2	2	2

*increase in the number of students in the same class from one year to another can be caused by students repeating the year (i.e. joined by students from more senior classes) or students transferred from another study programme

The department no longer offers distance learning mainly due to lack of student interest. All students enrolled in the programme are full-time students. Last distance learning students finished in the 2015/2016 academic year. The reason for ending the distance study programme was an overall decrease in the number of enrolled students at both the faculty and the department level. Also, tuition fees for distance study increased and the length of study was prolonged from a minimum of 3+2 years to 4+3 years (i.e. 4 years of bachelor's study and 3 years of master's). This has also discouraged potential distance learning students.

Programme structure offers three types of course in both degrees of study:

- compulsory courses
- compulsorily optional courses
- elective courses

Table 3: Bachelor's study programme structure

Study Programme: Public Administration and Regional Development							
Study Field: Public Administration and Regional Development							
Form: full-time							
Block – Compulsory courses							
Name	Recommended Study Plan* (tuition time i.e. no. of hours per week per semester)						
	No. of credits	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Economic Theory 1	5	2/2 S					
Business Economy	5	2/2 S					
Mathematics	5	2/2 S					
World Economy	5	2/2 S					

Informatics I	4	2/2 S					
Foreign Language 1	3	0/2 S					
World Economic Geography	3		2/0 S				
Economic Theory 2	5		2/2 S				
Informatics II	3		0/2 S				
Finance	5		2/2 S				
The Basics of Law	5		2/2 S				
Statistics	5		2/2 S				
Foreign Language 1	3		0/2 S				
Foreign Language 1	3			0/2 S			
Foreign Language 2	3			0/2 S			
Public Administration 1	3			2/0 S			
Regional Economics and Policy 1	6			2/2 S			
Economic Policy	5			2/2 S			
Accounting	5			2/2 S			
Physical activities - sport	1			0/2 Z			
Foreign Language 2	3				0/2 S		
Physical Activities - sport	1				0/2 Z		
Public Administration 2	5				2/2 S		
Marketing	5				2/2 S		
Management	5				2/2 S		
History of Economic Theories	4				2/0 S		
Quantitative Methods in Economics	5				2/2 S		
Final Thesis Seminar BP 1	2				0/2 Z		
Foreign Language 2	3					0/2 S	
Methods and Techniques of Regional Analysis	5					2/2 S	
Social Policy	5					2/2 S	
Tax Theory and Politics I	6					2/2 S	
Final Thesis Seminar BP 2	2					0/2 Z	
Public Sector Economy	5						2/2 S
Creating Programs and Projects	5						2/2 S
Administrative Law	3						2/0 S
National Economy	3						
Public Administration and Regional Development 1	3						
Final Thesis and its Defense	4						
SUM compulsory courses	156	27	29	26	30	21	23
Compulsory courses offered in foreign languages:							
Informatics II in English	3		0/2 S				
Economic Policy in English	5			2/2 S			
Economic Theory 1 in English	5	2/2 S					
Economic Theory 2 in English	5		2/2 S				
Economic Theory 1 in French	5	2/2 S					

Economic Theory 2 in French	5		2/2 S				
Regional Economics and Politics 1 in English	6	2/2 S		2/2 S		2/2 S	
Methods and Techniques of Regional Analysis in English	5	2/2 S		2/2 S		2/2 S	
Public Administration 1 in German	3	2/2 S		2/2 S		2/2 S	
Block – Compulsorily optional courses for Public Administration and Regional Development							
Name	Recommended Study Plan (tuition time i.e. no. of hours per week per semester)						
	No. of credits	1. s	2. s	3. s	4. s	5. s	6. s
Sociology	3	0/2 S		0/2 S		0/2 S	
Politics	3	0/2 S		0/2 S		0/2 S	
Philosophy	3	0/2 S					
Public Administration Workshop 1	3					0/2 S	
Regional Development Workshop 1	3				0/2 S		
Public Procurement	3			0/2 S		0/2 S	
Geographic Information Systems	3				0/2 S		0/2 S
Minimum no. of credits for compulsorily optional courses	6	Minimum 6 credits					
Sum minimum no. of credits for compulsory courses and compulsorily optional courses	162	Minimum 162 credits					
<p>For successful completion of the bachelor's degree, it is necessary to obtain at least 180 credits, which can be obtained by completing other compulsorily optional subjects in addition to the minimum number, or by completing elective courses from the following offer: <i>Applied social policy, Training firm, Training firm in GER, History of insurance, Economics of labor and human capital, Economics of Labor and Human Capital in EN, Empirical economic research, Empirical Economic Research in English, Economic Development 1, European programs and project development, Financial markets and banking, Economic policy in the era of globalization, Informatics III, Informatics III in EN, Innovative management in practice, Critical thinking and argumentation, Human Resources and Personnel Management in EN, National accounts, Insurance, Political geography, Political thinking, management and decision making, Psychology Practicum, Case studies from economic practice, Risk management and insurance, Risk Management and Insurance in EN, Budget theory and politics, Job interview simulator, Social security systems, Theory and Policy of Business Finance, Creation of professional papers and presentation skills, Public Administration 1 in GER, General economic history, Selected Problems of Social Policy in EN, Fundamentals of Rhetoric, Basics of stylistics</i></p>							
Recommended credit load for elective courses	18	Minimum 18 credits					
Sum minimum no. of credits for compulsory courses, compulsorily optional courses and elective courses	180	Minimum 180 credits					

Table 4: Master's Study Programme

Study Programme: Public Administration and Regional Development					
Study Field: Public Administration and Regional Development					
Form: full-time					
Block – Compulsory courses					
Name	Recommended Study Plan* (tuition time i.e. no. of hours per week per semester)				
	*S = a course ends with an exam Z = a course ends without an exam				
	No. of credits	S1	S2	S3	S4
Microeconomics 2	6	2/2 S			
Regional Geography of Slovakia	6	2/2 S			
Communal Policy	6	2/2 S			
Macroeconomics 2	6		2/2 S		
Urban Economics and Planning	6		2/2 S		
Regional Economics and Policy 2	6		2/2 S		
Final Thesis Seminar DP1*	2		0/2 Z		
Environmental Economics	3			2/0 S	
Comparative Public Administration	3			2/0 S	
Public Policy	6			2/2 S	
Regional Development Workshop 2	3			0/2 S	
Public Administration Workshop 2	3			0/2 S	
Final Thesis Seminar DP2 *	2			0/2 Z	
Regional and Urban Management	6				2/2 S
Microeconomics and Macroeconomics	3				
Public administration and regional development 2	3				
Final Thesis and its Defense	4				
SUM compulsory courses	74	18	20	20	16
Compulsory courses offered in foreign languages:					
Comparative Public Administration in English	3	2/0 S		2/0 S	
Microeconomics 2 in English	6	2/2 S			
Macroeconomics 2 in English	6		2/2 S		
Public Policy in German	6	2/2 S		2/2 S	
Public Policy in English	6	2/2 S		2/2 S	
Public Policy in English	6		2/2 S		2/2 S
Block – Compulsorily optional courses for Public Administration and Regional Development					
Name	Recommended Study Plan (tuition time i.e. no. of hours per week per semester)				
	No. of credits	S1	S2	S3	S4
EU Regional Policy	3		2/0 S		2/0 S
Ethics, Corruption and Transparency	6	2/2 S		2/2 S	

Regional Business Environment	6		2/2 S		0/2 S
Municipal Credit Worthiness	6	2/2 S		2/2 S	
Political Cohesion - Case Studies from Practice	3		0/2 S		0/2 S
Academic Debate	3		0/2 S		0/2 S
Minimum no. of credits for compulsorily optional courses	21	Minimum 21 credits			
Sum minimum no. of credits for compulsory courses and compulsorily optional courses	95	Minimum 95 credits			
For successful completion of the engineering study degree, it is necessary to obtain at least 120 credits, which can be obtained by completing other compulsorily optional subjects in addition to the minimum number, or by passing elective courses from the following offer: <i>Analysis and forecasting in finance, Efficiency and productivity analysis, Efficiency and Productivity Analysis in EN, Housing policy, Tax Theory and Politics II., Labor Market Economics, Economic growth in EN, Economic Development 2, Empirical analysis of economic growth, European social systems, Experimental Economics, Third sector finance, financial econometrics, Geography of network industries, Investment and innovation in the economy, Capital structure of business entities, Quality of life, Quality of Life in EN, Risk management in insurance, Public Finance Management, Knowledge management and organizational behavior, Methodology of scientific work, Professional seminar in economic analysis, Insurance market, insurance market in EN, Teacher's presentation skills - only for supplementary pedagogical study students, Rhetoric and Styling, Rhetoric for teachers - only for DPŠ students, Risk and uncertainty in finance, Macroeconomic Policy Seminar 1, Microeconomic Policy Seminar 1, Social entrepreneurship, Social work, Current political decision-making, Special Seminar on Macroeconomics, Introduction to public choice theory, Workshop in cooperation with NBS: regulation of insurance sector, Reinsurance, Reinsurance in EN, Health policy, Green economy, Green Economy in EN, Green economy in SPA</i>					
Recommended credit load for elective courses	25	Minimum 25 credits			
Sum minimum no. of credits for compulsory courses, compulsorily optional courses and elective courses	120	Minimum 120 credits			
Recommended study plan recap					
Courses	Credit load				
	No. of credits	S1	S2	S3	S4
compulsory courses	74	18	20	20	16
Compulsorily optional courses	21	minimum 21			
Elective courses	25	minimum 25			
Sum for study programme	120	minimum 120 credits			

1.3 LIST OF GENERAL COMPETENCIES FOR THE PROGRAMME

General competencies for the bachelor's and master's programme are part of the final state examination testing. There are always 3 performance criteria or levels:

- Exceeds expectations (2 points)
- Meets expectations (1 point)
- Does not meet expectations (0 points)

1.3.1 Bachelor's degree general competencies

Bachelor's degree general competencies are divided into the following educational goals and educational outputs (for more details and specific goals see below):

2. Improve the ability to acquire and process information and improve communication skills
 - 2.1 Students are able to independently obtain relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development.
 - 2.2 Students are able to process the information obtained into a coherent, appropriately structured written material and present the main ideas to the audience using ICT
3. Developing analytical thinking and skills
 - 3.1 Students are able to acquire the necessary quantitative or qualitative data and descriptively describe the existing state and/or development in a given topic
 - 3.2 Students are familiar with basic quantitative and qualitative methods through which they can analyze the existing state and background
4. Improving team work
 - 4.1 Students are able to participate in team work, understand the assigned tasks and contribute to team results.
 - 4.2 Students are able to estimate the time and content intensity of a given task and identify resources for performing the task and understand the limitations that limit the execution of the task

Educational goal: (of the Final Thesis Defence)

2. Improve the ability to acquire and process information and improve communication skills

Educational Output:

- 2.1 Students are able to independently obtain relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development.
- The student is well versed in the potential sources of information on a given topic
 - The student can critically evaluate the quality of literature and other information he uses in his final work
 - The student uses resources that can be considered relevant and up to date on the subject
- 2.2 Students are able to process the information obtained into a coherent, appropriately structured written material and present the main ideas to the audience using ICT
- The aim of the work is clearly defined
 - The conclusion summarizes the main findings
 - In the final thesis the student presents the source of all used data
 - The student explains in detail the selection of the method of analysis used and is aware of its shortcomings
 - The presentation of the final thesis describes all the main areas of work
 - The presentation of the final thesis is of appropriate length
 - The student can use ICT appropriately during the presentation of the final thesis
 - Student keeps eye contact with commission during presentation (80% of time)

Evaluation scale

22 - 15 Overall exceeds expectations

14 - 8 Overall meets expectations

7 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Educational goal: (of the Final Thesis Defence)

3. Developing analytical thinking and skills

Educational output:

3.1 Students are able to acquire the necessary quantitative or qualitative data and descriptively describe the existing state and/or development in a given topic

- The student knows the existing data sources on the topic
- The student chose a suitable data source, resp. appropriate method of data collection
- The student knows the disadvantages of the data source used in the final thesis
- The student can defend sample selection for his research
- The student can interpret the state or development of the issue under examination based on the data used

3.2 Students are familiar with basic quantitative and qualitative methods through which they can analyze the existing state and background

- The student can justify the choice of quantitative resp. of the qualitative analytical method in the topic under consideration and the following reasons
- The student correctly uses the chosen quantitative resp. qualitative analytical method
- The student can interpret the analysis results in sufficient detail
- The student identifies the limitations of his / her own research and suggests additional analyses to complement the research

Evaluation scale

18 - 12 Overall exceeds expectations

11 - 6 Overall meets expectations

5 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Educational goal: (of the course *Regional Development Workshop 1*)

4. Improving team work

Educational output:

4.1 Students are able to participate in team work, understand the assigned tasks and contribute to team results.

- The student actively contributes to the solution of the topic
- Students can divide the tasks and/or responsibility in the team
- Students can critically evaluate their contribution to team work

4.2 Students are able to estimate the time and content intensity of a given task and identify resources for performing the task and understand the limitations that limit the execution of the task

- Students can plan work schedules
- Students can identify in advance their content and can design creative solutions
- Students deliver their outputs within a set deadline
- Students deliver their outputs in agreed quality
- Students can critically evaluate their contribution to meeting deadlines and quality of outputs

Evaluation scale

- 11 - 11 Overall exceeds expectations
- 10 - 6 Overall meets expectations
- 5 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

1.3.2 Master’s degree general competencies

Master’s degree general competencies are divided into the following educational goals and educational outputs (for more details and specific goals see below). The first and so far the last comprehensive assessment was conducted in the 2018/2019 academic year (Number of students: 25).

2. Improve the ability to acquire and process information and improve communication skills
 - 2.1 Students are able to independently find relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development as well as in a foreign language
 - 2.2 Students are able to process acquired information into a structured material, propose a suitable solution and defend their arguments in front of the audience
3. Improve management skills
 - 3.1 Students are able to lead a team of people, create, plan and control tasks, organize workshops, and take responsibility for team results
 - 3.2 Students are able to identify the causality of the problem relationship and its solution, they are able to design and defend the choice of adequate solutions, understand the complexity of the problem and its links to other activities of the organization
4. Developing analytical thinking and skills
 - 4.1 Students are able to identify the problem and the underlying context, can identify data requirements, orient themselves in existing resources and/or they can define data collection requirements.
 - 4.2 On the basis of an analysis of the problem using available software, they can explore the context and suggest possible analysis-based solutions.

Educational goal: (of the course *Final Thesis Defence*)

2. Improve the ability to acquire and process information and improve communication skills

Performance criterion	Overall exceeds expectations	Overall meets expectations	Overall does not meet expectations
2.1 Students are able to independently find relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development as well as in a foreign language			
The student is able to find and process information from relevant foreign sources on the given topic	5 (20%)	13 (52%)	7 (28%)
The student can explain and argue the national and international context of the final thesis	7 (28%)	14 (56%)	4(16%)
The student cites the information used	7 (28%)	16 (64%)	2 (8 %)

in accordance with the technical standard			
The student works with the latest information and sufficient domestic and foreign resources	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4(16%)
2.2 Students are able to process acquired information into a structured material, propose a suitable solution and defend their arguments in front of the audience			
The final thesis has a logical and balanced structure	5 (20%)	19 (76%)	1 (4%)
The research question is formulated to a clear goal	6 (24%)	15 (60%)	4(16%)
The final thesis has a suitably chosen and sufficiently explained methodology	8 (32%)	13 (52%)	4(16%)
The student knows and can work with basic scientific methods	7 (28%)	15 (60%)	3 (12%)
Processing the current state of knowledge of the issue	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4 (16%)
The conclusion of the thesis clearly declares the student's contribution to the work theme	6 (24%)	15 (60%)	4 (16%)
The presentation of the final thesis describes all the main areas of work	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4 (16%)
The student fulfilled the goal of the thesis by the chosen methodological procedure and answered the research question	4 (16%)	17 (68%)	4 (16%)
Student performance meets the requirements of appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, including the means of communication chosen	5 (20%)	17 (68%)	3 (12%)
The student is able to justify his / her proposed measures in the context of the current solution in practice	5 (20%)	15 (60%)	5 (20%)
<p>Evaluation: 28 - 19 Overall exceeds expectations 18 - 10 Overall meets expectations 9 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations</p> <p>Final score: Overall exceeds expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%) Overall meets expectations: 12 (= 48 %) Overall does not meet expectations: 6 (= 24 %)</p> <p>Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 76% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is unfulfilled</p>			

Educational goal: (of the course *Regional Business Environment**)

3. Improve management skills

* Evaluation of the 3rd educational goal will take place in the winter semester of the academic year 2019/2020 in the course *Regional Business Environment*.

Educational output:

3.1 Students are able to lead a team of people, create, plan and control tasks, organize workshops, and take responsibility for team results

- The student can plan a team work schedule
- The student can plan and divide tasks
- Students are also able to deal adequately with the limited time for the task
- Students deliver their outputs in agreed quality
- Students can critically evaluate their contribution to team work
- The output of the work is presented in a form and manner as a result of the joint work, not the partial contributions of individuals

3.2 Students are able to identify the causality of the problem relationship and its solution, they are able to design and defend the choice of adequate solutions, understand the complexity of the problem and its links to other activities of the organization

- Students are able to disaggregate the problem to the individual factual elements of the problem
- Students can explain the causality between the elements of the problem
- The student is able to justify the chosen solution, can identify its advantages and disadvantages to another solution
- Students can propose systemic solutions to the problem
- Students can identify the impact of proposed solutions on the organization and the environment in which it operates

Evaluation

22 - 15 Overall exceeds expectations

14 - 8 Overall meets expectations

7 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Educational goal: (of the course *Final Thesis Defence*)

4. Developing analytical thinking and skills

Performance criterion	Overall exceeds expectations	Overall meets expectations	Overall does not meet expectations
4.1 Students are able to identify the problem and the underlying context, can identify data requirements, orient themselves in existing resources and/or they can define data collection requirements.			
The student can identify the problem in relation to the necessary data	8(32%)	14 (56%)	3 (12%)
The student can justify the selection of the sample for its research including its	6 (24%)	12 (48%)	7(28%)

statistical significance			
The student worked with a sufficient / representative data base obtained in primary research	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	8(32 %)
Sampling and data base are the guarantee of originality of work	4(16%)	14 (64%)	7(28%)
4.2 On the basis of an analysis of the problem using available software, they can explore the context and suggest possible analysis-based solutions.			
The student can justify the choice of quantitative and/or qualitative analytical method in the examined topic	7(28%)	11 (44%)	6 (24%)
The student correctly uses the chosen quantitative and/or qualitative analytical method	5 (20%)	11 (44%)	9(36%)
The student applied the appropriate software for the selected analysis	6 (24%)	14 (64%)	5 (20 %)
The student can interpret the results of the analysis sufficiently and critically evaluate them	5 (20%)	14 (64%)	6 (24%)
The student can defend the most important findings in the context of the goal of the work	5 (20%)	15 (60%)	5 (20%)
The student is able to formulate the critical points of the studied problem	3 (12%)	16 (64%)	6 (24%)
Based on the analysis, the student can propose a systemic solution to the problem	4(16%)	14 (64%)	7(28%)
<p>Evaluation: 22 - 15 Overall exceeds expectations 14 - 8 Overall meets expectations 7 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations</p> <p>Final score: Overall exceeds expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%) Overall meets expectations: 12 (= 48 %) Overall does not meet expectations: 6 (= 24 %)</p> <p>Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 76% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is unfulfilled</p>			

1.4 LIST OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES FOR THE PROGRAMME

Programme-specific competencies for the bachelor's and master's programme are part of the final state examination testing. There are always 3 performance criteria or levels:

- Exceeds expectations (2 points)
- Meets expectations (1 point)
- Does not meet expectations (0 points)

1.4.1 Bachelor's degree programme-specific competencies

Bachelor's degree programme-specific competencies are divided into the following educational goals and educational outputs (for more details and specific goals see below):

Educational goal: (of the Final Thesis Defence)

1. Developing knowledge and knowledge in public administration and regional development

Educational output:

1.1 Students have basic knowledge in economics and management

- The student appropriately uses economic terms in the final thesis and in its presentation
- The student can explain the basic economic principles that relate to the topic of his final thesis

1.2 Students know the basic mechanisms of regional development and understand the system of public administration

- The student can determine which public administration institutions are concerned with the topic
- The student is able to determine what competencies the concerned institutions have in solving the given topic
- The student is able to explain how the addressed topic affects the development of the concerned region and/or municipality
- The student can propose a framework solution to the problem he/she is dealing with in the dissertation
- The student knows the legislative environment that regulates the activities of public administration institutions in regional development

Evaluation

14 - 10 Overall exceeds expectations

9 - 6 Overall meets expectations

5 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

1.4.2 Master's degree programme-specific competencies

Master's degree programme-specific competencies are divided into the following educational goals and educational outputs (for more details and specific goals see below). The first and so far the last comprehensive assessment was conducted in the 2018/2019 academic year (Number of students: 25).

Educational goal: (of the course *Final Thesis Defence*)

1. Developing knowledge in public administration and regional development

Performance criterion	Overall exceeds expectations	Overall meets expectations	Overall does not meet expectations
1.1 Students can analyze the problems of public administration and regional development			

also with regard to the broader context of economic development at national and international level			
The student can identify the basic macro / micro economic context of the final thesis topic	7 (28%)	14 (56%)	4 (16%)
The student can explain and argue the national and international context of the final thesis	6 (24%)	14 (56%)	5 (20%)
The student can explain the link between the topic of the final thesis and the scientific concepts of public administration and regional development	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4(16%)
The student can formulate appropriate measures to solve the analyzed problem	6 (24%)	14 (56%)	5 (20%)
1.2 Students have knowledge of multiple public policies and can identify the interrelationships between them			
The student is able to critically evaluate the current state of the issue	6 (24%)	14 (56%)	5 (20%)
The student can determine the overlap of public policies related to the topic of the final thesis	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4(16%)
The student can explain how the solved topic uses the synergic effect of multiple policy tools	3 (12%)	16 (64%)	6 (24%)
The student is able to synthesize the importance of the topic for different levels of government and sectors of the economy	7 (28%)	12 (48%)	6 (24%)
The student can explain and argue the benefits of the final thesis	7 (28%)	11 (44%)	7 (28%)
<p>Evaluation: 18 - 13 Overall exceeds expectations 12 - 7 Overall meets expectations 6 - 0 Overall does not meet expectations</p> <p>Final score: Overall exceeds expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%) Overall meets expectations: 13 (= 52 %) Overall does not meet expectations: 5 (= 20 %)</p> <p>Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 80% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is unfulfilled</p>			

2. COMPETENCE SCREENING HISTORY AT THE DEPARTMENT OR FACULTY LEVEL

Screening and reviewing of competencies and/or programme structure have been carried out so far for internal purposes. Some form have been created recently for the purpose of international accreditation at the faculty level. Not all available forms or questionnaires have been distributed and some of them have been distributed by the faculty or the university as a whole – i.e. not targeting students and graduates of public administration and regional development and/or their employers. Hence, the authors provide an overview of the various questionnaires that have been prepared by the faculty/university and the respective methodologies.

2.1 HISTORY OF PREVIOUS COMPETENCE SCREENING ENDEAVOURS

There have been a number of competence and/or programme structure screening endeavours – some of them already conducted, others still waiting to be performed and hence only questionnaires and methodologies are available. The following is the list of relevant screening endeavours:

- Student satisfaction survey
- Competence screening (see section 1.3 and 1.4 above)
- Course tuition quality assessment (form F2.1)
- Internal course quality assessment (F3.1)
- Internal quality assessment of study programmes (form F3.2)

2.1.1 Student satisfaction survey

Students every semester complete surveys regarding quality of tuition and individual courses but the department does not have access to the individual and/or aggregated results – they stay within the faculty officials. Faculty uses the data for personal assessment of faculty staff. If performance is not satisfactory, then the faculty may ask the teacher to undertake a teaching skills course. If performance has not improved both in terms of teaching and research, then this can be a reason not to renew the job contract. The faculty has been testing different methods of data collection. Currently, it is carried out via external website during tuition process. The faculty representatives come to the students during lectures or seminars and ask them to fill in the online survey. Since the students have to fill in the survey in that particular moment and the survey asks about all the courses and teachers they have, the return rate is not satisfactory and there has also been criticism regarding the quality of evaluation. Other proposal have been put forward as how to conduct the student satisfaction survey. They are currently under review process.

Table 5: List of questions in the student satisfaction survey (faculty level)

Year of study:
Study programme:
Course name:
Name and surname of lecturer(s):

How challenging was the content of the subject? (Scale 1 to 5)
What was your participation in the lectures? (Scale 1 to 5)
Quality of teaching process at lectures. Was the interpretation comprehensible and sufficiently illustrative? Did the lecturer show adequate presentation skills, verbal and non-verbal communication? Did he/she activate and support student creativity? (Scale 1 to 5)
Your perception of the lecturer as an expert in the field. Was he/she oriented in the lectures? Ready for teaching? Able to respond to the questions asked? Did he/she use current knowledge and opinions? (Scale 1 to 5)
Lecturer's approach to students. Was he/she willing to help, communicate outside hours, provide the necessary information? Did he have a fair and unbiased approach to students? (Scale 1 to 5)
Name and surname of teaching assistant(s):
The quality of the teaching process in seminars. Tuition was understandable, the level of verbal and non-verbal communication and presentation skills of the teaching assistant is high, the degree of activation and support of student creativity, the degree of clarity sufficient. (Scale 1 to 5)
Perception of the teaching assistant as an expert in the field. Orientation in lectured issues, readiness for teaching, ability to respond to the questions asked, appropriate use of current knowledge and opinions. (Scale 1 to 5)
Teaching assistant's approach to students. Collegial approach: willingness to help, communication outside hours, providing the necessary information, fair and unbiased approach to students. (Scale 1 to 5)
Comments, suggestions for subject changes here:

2.1.2 Competence screening

See section 1.3 and 1.3 above.

2.1.3 Course tuition quality assessment (form F2.1)

The faculty asks its departments to plan and carry out own course tuition quality assessment. Each academic year, the department chooses two or three courses that undergo this assessment. Course assessment is carried out via peer review process. Lecturer or teaching assistant is being assessed by one of his or her departmental colleagues who attends and observes his/her lecture or seminar. The reviewer then fills in the following form (F2.1) and asks the reviewed staff to add comments and express approval or disapproval with the review. It is then submitted to the faculty management staff who can further analyse the data and use it for instance in staff appraisal, job interviews, staff selection process and promoting staff and granting staff bonuses or extra pay.

Evaluation is in textual form and scores from 1 (best) to 5 (worst) in the following categories:

- Teacher's readiness for the pedagogical process and presentation of professional issues:

- Lecture / seminar management; use of teaching aids and case studies
- Communication with students (student interest in discussion)
- Overall score
- Major strengths (text only)
- Major weaknesses (text only)
- Recommendations

2.1.4 Internal course quality assessment (F3.1)

Also, each course is every two years being subject to internal course assessment (form F3.1). This is a mixture of self-assessment and peer-review assessment carried out by one of departmental staff and approved by the guarantor of the course, Head of Department and in cases of faculty-wide or university-wide courses also by the faculty's dean or rector (not the case/not applicable for our study programme).

Evaluation is in textual form and scores from 1 (best) to 5 (worst) in the following categories:

- Focus of the course
- Inclusion of the course in the curriculum of a given degree of study
- Form of teaching
- Extent of curriculum, examination, credits
- The importance of the course for fulfilling the profile of the graduate of the given programme or field
- Quality and topicality of study literature
- Study literature availability
- Link between the course and research
- The level of communicative competence of teachers in the language of instruction (evaluated only for courses provided fully in a foreign language)
- Overall rating (score only)
- Proposal for changes in the course and their justification

Table 6: Methodology of internal course quality assessment

Evaluation carried by	- the responsible department in cooperation with the course guarantor and the course teachers
Evaluation frequency	- once every two academic years - in case of serious deficiencies identified from student questionnaires and observations once per academic year -
Form of implementation	- review of the course in accordance with the content of the form is carried out by the responsible department in cooperation with the course guarantor and the teachers of the course; The basis for the evaluation is also the results of surveys of the relevant groups of respondents (i.e. students) and records of observations.
Who is responsible	- for the evaluation of the course and the preparation of proposals for changes - the course guarantor -
Access to results	- evaluation of the course by the course guarantor - all course teachers - evaluation of the course by the course guarantor - head of department - evaluation of all courses of the department - head of department - evaluation of all faculty courses - dean of the faculty - evaluation of all university courses – rector of the university

	-
Discussing the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discussion of course evaluation and of proposals by the subject guarantor - at the meeting of teachers who teach the given course - discussion of evaluation of all courses provided by the department and discussion of proposals for courses - at the departmental meeting - discussion of evaluations and conclusions of all faculty departments as part of the summary report on quality assessment - at the meeting of the dean's college - Consideration of assessments and conclusions of all courses of the university core as part of the summary report on quality assessment - at the rector's college meeting
Proposals and taking measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking measures - individually according to the nature of the findings - suggestions for changes in the content of the course - approved by the department - Proposals for changes in the inclusion of the course in the study plan of the given study programme - approved by the Academic Senate of the Faculty / University - proposals for inclusion of new courses in the curriculum of the given study programme - approved by the accreditation commission of faculty / university and faculty / university academic senate.
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes and updates in the course content can be implemented continuously - partial changes in the inclusion of the course in the study plan (change of the extent of tuition, form of tuition, inclusion in the particular semester) of the given study programme - can be implemented once a year - complex changes in the inclusion of the course in the study plan (discarding the course, inclusion of a new course) - can be implemented in a complex accreditation of the study programme -

2.1.5 Internal quality assessment of study programmes (form F3.2)

Last faculty's internal quality assessment of study programmes was carried out on 15 June 2015. The first and as of today the only such assessment was self-evaluated by study programme's guarantor professor Elena Žárska. Evaluation (form F3.2) is in textual form and scores from 1 (best) to 5 (worst).

Table 7: 2015 internal quality assessment of the study programme

Study programme guarantor	prof. Elena Žárska
Changes made to the curriculum since the last assessment and the effects of these changes	(score not applicable) So far, the study programme has not been evaluated in this way, but the preparation and elaboration of the accreditation file in 2014 is the result of a review of the valid study programme, in which several changes have been incorporated in order to streamline and improve its current structure and material fulfillment.
Consistency of the study programme's title with its content	(1) The study programme is content-related to its title, which required its interdisciplinary composition with the interconnection of economic, legal, political and territorial-urban disciplines. The balance of the programme is achieved both by the number and extent of teaching

	mandatory courses with regard to their focus and also by offering elective courses in the field as well as other fields corresponding to complementarity in relation to the graduate profile.
Compliance of study programme's courses with graduate profile of this programme or department	(1) The profile is based on the assumption that the graduate is able to systematize, analyze and solve problems related to the performance of public administration functions, especially in the area of regional development support at the national, regional and local levels and knows modern approaches to the management of public administration and implementation of development activities. At the same time, he is able to lead development projects in analysis, financial programming and budgeting, implementation and impact assessment, actively working with information and communication technologies, mastering advanced computer skills and working with software for analysis, interpretation and presentation of data. The profile formulated in this way was entitled to increase theoretical knowledge, practical skills, which was reflected in the content and methodology of individual subjects, their continuous updating and the increase in the proportion of quantitative approaches. At the same time, it is worth noting that a number of courses had already been designed and included in the curriculum to enhance computer skills and design capabilities.
Continuity in the structure of courses in individual semesters	(2) The evaluation of the study programme in terms of logical construction and continuity of courses led to the processing of a new accreditation file on the redeployment of some project-oriented course, the use of quantitative approaches and creative and presentation skills into the 1 st degree of study, which would allow deeper insight into the issue and more intensive use of interactive teaching methods. Thus, it is not just a view of one degree of study, but a comprehensive view of both 1 st and 2 nd degree of study.
Adequacy of the number of courses in the study programme	(1) The number of courses in the field of study is determined by the number of credits and the number of exams. This constitutes the basic framework for the course construction of the study programme.
Scope of individual courses	(1) Individual courses are designed according to whether they are mandatory or elective modules and also in terms of content. The majority of mandatory courses are 2/2 (2 hour lecture + 2 hour seminar) and award 6 credits. Elective courses have the same scope. Two mandatory courses are 2/0 (lectures only) and award 3 credits and two other mandatory courses with a more practical or workshop approach are 0/2 (seminars only) and award 3 credits. Organisation and scope of courses have so far proved to be suitable and the same makeup of courses was proposed for the next period.
Offer of elective and optional courses	(2) It is possible to evaluate the offer of elective courses as insufficient in two levels - to keep the field of study interdisciplinary and to develop the programme with such courses that would maintain openness and wide choice by students. This enables them to pursue courses close to their interests and also encourages responsibility for such a choice. The content of the study programme strengthens these possibilities, but is again limited by the number of credits. However, from the student perspective, they are not limited as long as they are willing to choose and earn more credits than is the minimum required. The range and option of elective and optional courses within the study field has increased in the last few years and students now may take optional courses within the study field if they wish to. Others may take optional courses offered by any department

	or faculty of the university. The department encourages students' right to choose.
Study programme compliance with practice requirements	(2) The study programme is oriented especially through the seminars in order to solve real-life problems of practical issues. The department and individual lecturers and teaching assistants have close links and regularly invite guests and practitioners to their lectures and seminars. In many cases, these partners and partner institutions help staff and students with research and data for dissertations. One of the possible limitations, is the student optionality to take part in internships or apprenticeships offered by relevant public administration institutions (municipal authorities, self-governing regions, related departments of state administration offices at national level and specialized agencies, scientific research institutes, non-profit organizations, resp. EU administrative structures). Students may now choose one of the elective courses which will award them credits for completing an apprenticeship. However, not all students use this opportunity despite the fact that they can choose the organisation and it can increase their career options and help them to make a career choice.
Study programme compliance with current knowledge in the field and foreign universities	(1) The consistency of the study programme with the current state of knowledge is achieved mainly by scientific research activities of the members of the department in international projects as well as by domestic research teams based on networking of several universities, presence of significant foreign professors for semester stays, participation of departmental members in foreign study leaves, membership in the decision-making institutions as well as cooperation with institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The presence of foreign professors, their recommendations and mutual confrontations are prerequisites for achieving and maintaining compatibility with similar departments at foreign universities, and their ideas and comments have been taken into account in the new (i.e. last) accreditation.
Linkage of the study programme with research	(1) The department, being the body in charge of the study programme, has a long-term significant and extensive international and domestic research activity, which is a prerequisite for being at the current level of knowledge, developing new topics and problems in the theoretical, methodological and application levels with an impact on the development of public administration theory and regional development and also with an impact on the recommendations and needs of economic practice. Part of this is the involvement of students in research tasks while they are working on their theses. The outputs of the research activity are directly transferred to individual courses, they are the content of publishing activities and form part of the study literature.
Consistency of the content and scope of state examinations of the study programme with the content and scope of the study programme and study field	(3) The study programme is completed by a state final examination consisting of defence of a thesis and two specialized subjects/fields: 1/microeconomics and macroeconomics, and 2/public administration and regional development. This is a faculty-wide agreed model and we will initiate a change in the content orientation of the first subject/field (Microeconomics and Macroeconomics) in relation to our programme field and strengthen the importance of defence of the thesis in the overall assessment.
Availability of study literature needed to complete the study	(1) The availability of literature can be assessed as sufficient due to access to and availability of own textbooks, textbooks translated from abroad, other study materials and literature, foreign journals

programme:	and home sources. The Department also has its own library, consisting mainly of foreign authors, monographs and university textbooks. Students of our courses are provided with literature. New textbooks are gradually created and teaching texts updated.
The level of communicative competence of teachers in the language of instruction (assessed only in the curricula provided completely in a foreign language):	Not applicable
Proposal for changes to the study programme and their justification:	Given that the study programme under review passed a detailed analysis and assessment last year (i.e. 2014) as a basis for the accreditation of the programme, it is not required to formulate changes as of now.
Date	15.6.2015

2.1.6 Other screenings and questionnaires

The university and individual faculties also distribute a questionnaire to alumni of the university (questionnaire F6-R1). The purpose of the survey is not to test competencies but to evaluate employability of alumni on the job market. Furthermore, the faculty also contacts employers and asks them about quality of graduates and alumni of the university (questionnaire F6-R2). The faculty has also prepared another questionnaire (F6-V2) which targets students, alumni, teachers, practitioners and asks them about study programmes. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain information that will lead to better pedagogical work by implementing changes in the content of the study programmes and comparing and adapting it to the content of analogous study programmes at renowned foreign universities. Anyone who knows the content of the study programme can express their opinion on the study programme. The faculty has not provided the data from these questionnaires and can only be used for internal purposes. Some of the questionnaires despite being ready have not been distributed yet.

2.2 MAIN FINDINGS

According to the new rules, the programme council that is composed of 4 members of staff (1 professor and guarantor of the degree programme, 2 associate professors, 1 research assistant and administrator), 1 practitioner from the field, 1 alumnus and 1 student meets on annual basis. The programme council will meet in middle June to discuss the following findings:

25 students of the master's study degree were evaluated in 2018/2019 academic year. The following is the summary of student competencies results in terms of meeting general educational goals. For further details and meeting individual competencies, see section 1.3 and 1.4 above. Evaluation of the 3rd educational goal and individual competencies will take place in the winter semester of the academic year 2019/2020 in the course Regional Business Environment.

Educational goal 1: Developing knowledge in public administration and regional development

Number of students who overall exceed expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%)

Number of students who overall meets expectations: 13 (= 52 %)

Number of students who overall do not meet expectations: 5 (= 20 %)

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 80% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is **unfulfilled**

Educational goal no. 2: Improve the ability to acquire and process information and improve communication skills

Number of students who overall exceed expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%)

Number of students who overall meets expectations: 12 (= 48 %)

Number of students who overall do not meet expectations: 6 (= 24 %)

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 76% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is **unfulfilled**

Educational goal no. 4: Developing analytical thinking and skills

Number of students who overall exceed expectations (no., %): 7 (= 28%)

Number of students who overall meets expectations: 12 (= 48 %)

Number of students who overall do not meet expectations: 6 (= 24 %)

Required performance level: At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations.

Comparison of the final score to the desired performance level: 76% of students overall meet and/or exceed expectations, i. e. minimum of 85% is **unfulfilled**

2.3 CORRECTIVE ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

The members of the programme council will discuss the findings from the recent competence evaluation of master's degree students by the end of June 2019. This will be the first meeting of the programme council and it will come up with corrective actions.

2.4 BRIEF SUMMARY

The department and the faculty perform a number of screenings. For the purposes of this assessment, the most relevant is the competencies screening that was carried out for the first time in the current academic year 2018/2019. The department has relatively high expectations and targets for master's students (i.e. required performance level). At least 85% of students should meet or exceed expectations in the given educational goals, outputs and competencies. However, in the first such screening, none of the targets were met. Nevertheless, the results were close to the target (80%, 76%, 76%) and indicate high standards of expectations and competencies quality of postgraduate students.

3. METHODOLOGY

The authors of the report collected data in two ways: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Alumni and graduates were questioned in two separate focus groups in November 2018 (graduates) and February 2019 (alumni). Employers took part in semi-structured interviews that took part from November 2018 to April 2019. Some of them were carried out face to face, others via telephone. Alumni, graduates and employers were asked to provide qualitative assessment of the existing competencies, missing competencies, curriculum quality, other challenges and recommendations. Authors of the report decided to

gather opinion on both general and programme-specific competencies. This is because the number of set programme-specific competencies is rather limited (bachelor's: 7, master's: 9) and general competencies despite being "general" are attained via courses offered by the study programme's department.

Alumni were selected based on different age groups and willingness to participate. The group consisted of postgraduate alumni ranging from 1 to 8 years after master's degree graduation. The group of graduates consisted entirely of masters' study programme's current postgraduate students. Further semi-structured interviews were also conducted when necessary. Employers were selected based on working experience and long-term partnership of the department and departmental staff with them. The authors interviewed staff in positions with managerial experience.

1/ Focus group alumni (7 alumni)

- 2x Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic
- 1x Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic
- 2x Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society
- 1x Private consultancy specializing in EU structural funds
- 1x Private international corporation

2/ Focus group graduates (5 current postgraduate students)

- 4x female students
- 1x male student

3/ Semi-structured interviews with employers (8 employers)

- 1x banking industry, Regional Director
- 1x Private consultancy specializing in EU structural funds, Project Manager
- 1x Technology company, Chief Information Officer
- 1x non-profit organisation, Chairman
- 1x Office of the Plenipotentiary for Development of Civil Society, Project Chief
- 1x Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Head of Department
- 1x Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Head of Unit
- 1x Regional Self-Government, Head of Department

4. DATA COLLECTION – RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The following section includes summaries of the conducted focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The authors made an effort to provide comments which best describe the general agreement from focus groups and overlap from semi-structured interviews. Some individual answers are also added to the general comments when authors felt that such a comment was relevant. Each time such an individual comment is added, the text describes the particular context and/or situation. A qualitative approach was used instead of the recommended quantitative analysis due to limited access to programme's alumni. The Department uses group emails only and we were able to access our alumni only via social media accounts – hence we were not able to put together a significant quantitative research sample.

4.1 RESULTS – COMPETENCIES SCREENING BY POSTGRADUATES AND ALUMNI

Table 1: Bachelor's competences screening by postgraduates and alumni

Competence	Knowledge - comments
	Skill - comments
1.1 Students have basic knowledge in economics and management	<i>This is a useful competence but extra knowledge is necessary. Most alumni choose to pursue postgraduate study (i.e. engineering degree and in most cases PARD) since basic knowledge in economic and management and bachelor's degree is not sufficient for most PARD employers. Most PARD employers still request at least postgraduate degree (i.e. master's or engineering degree) of study. This competence also allows students to pursue other postgraduate degree of study. So they do not have to stick with PARD. Also, in terms of employability, it gives them flexibility since they do not need to focus on PARD jobs only but can look into other fields as well. Most PARD students after completion of their bachelor's study start to work on part-time and some even on a full-time basis while still pursuing full-time master's study. Most of the occupations are professional and use their knowledge in economics and management. Employers are not so much interested in the degree of study but instead consider University of Economics and Faculty of National Economy as a brand and a quality mark for graduates seeking part-time student jobs or first graduate jobs.</i>
	<i>Most of the information is theoretical and the focus of this competence is on knowledge rather than skill. Alumni would like to see more skill-based and practice-oriented subjects – both from the PARD Department and the Faculty as a whole.</i>
1.2 Students know the basic mechanisms of regional development and understand the system of public administration	<i>This is a useful competence when a graduate or later postgraduate is looking for a job within the PARD field. For most private sector employers this is not an important competence. One alumni worked for a private consultancy which also provides B2G solutions especially in terms of EU funds. The company hired him partly because of his knowledge in this field.</i>
	<i>Most of the learnt information is theoretical and the focus of this competence is on knowledge rather than skill. Alumni would like to see more skill-based and practice-oriented subjects – both from the PARD Department and the Faculty as a whole.</i>
2.1 Students are able to independently obtain relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development.	<i>This is a more skill-based competence although theoretical knowledge was also useful – in particular the knowledge of the many ways how to search for relevant information and how to distinguish between useful/relevant/academic information vs fake/inappropriate information sources. Bachelor's study offers some courses which focus on this competence. Courses with written assignments and presentations were useful in particular.</i>

	<i>Useful competence. This is a transferable skills so graduates are able to use this competence not only in the PARD field but also in other fields. Student part-time jobs are often based on searching for information.</i>
2.2 Students are able to process the information obtained into a coherent, appropriately structured written material and present the main ideas to the audience using ICT	<i>This is a more skill-based competence although theoretical knowledge was also useful.</i>
	<i>Most employers require graduates to be able to process information and present it either in the written form or deliver a presentation. Bachelor's degree of study gives students a number of opportunities to acquire and train this crucial skill. PARD Department and its teachers focus heavily on student presentation and quality of written assignments – compared to some other departments at the Faculty of National Economy. This is not only the case with the Final Thesis but also other courses throughout the bachelor's degree of study.</i>
3.1 Students are able to acquire the necessary quantitative or qualitative data and descriptively describe the existing state and/or or development in a given topic	<i>Learning this competence is very useful although most students do not realize the usefulness of it until much later – when they look for a job. In terms of student understanding, it is also one of the more difficult parts of the study but well worth it.</i>
	<i>Not only theoretical knowledge but practical skills are crucial. Many employers look for graduates and later postgraduates with this competence.</i>
3.2 Students are familiar with basic quantitative and qualitative methods through which they can analyze the existing state and background	<i>Similarly to 3.2, learning this competence is very useful although most students do not realize the usefulness of it until much later – when they look for a job. In terms of student understanding, it is also one of the more difficult parts of the study but well worth it.</i>
	<i>Not only theoretical knowledge but practical skills are crucial. Many employers look for graduates and later postgraduates with this competence.</i>
4.1 Students are able to participate in team work, understand the assigned tasks and contribute to team results.	<i>PARD department has a number of courses which require and develop team work among students. There is not much information or knowledge given in terms of the competence. It is more skills-based.</i>
	<i>Team work is one of the most useful competences and skills students learnt during their bachelor's study degree. They would like to see even more of it.</i>
4.2 Students are able to estimate the time and content intensity of a given task and identify resources for performing the task and understand the	<i>This is more of a skills-based competence. Knowledge acquired is through practical experience (i.e. assignments, presentation, exam preparation, etc.).</i>
	<i>A very useful competence which is highly valued among employers. Tight deadlines and numerous assignments and exams at the same time help students to boost their multi-</i>

limitations that limit the execution of the task.	<i>tasking and time-management skills.</i>
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Table 2: Master's competences screening by postgraduates and alumni

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Knowledge - comments</i>
	<i>Skill - comments</i>
1.1 Students can analyze the problems of public administration and regional development also with regard to the broader context of economic development at national and international level	<i>Acoording to alumni, PARD field employers might be more interested in this competence than private sector employers. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. Alumni who work in private sector did not find this competency useful and/or relevant. They view knowledge and skill similarly. Postgraduate students appreciated this competency as it was largely missing in the bachelor's degree when they felt that what they learn in different courses is not related and they were missing the broader context..</i>
	<i>Similarly to the comment on the knowledge perspective, PARD field employers might be more interested in this competence than private sector employers. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. Alumni who work in private sector did not find this competence useful and/or relevant. They view knowledge and skill similarly.</i>
1.2 Students have knowledge of multiple public policies and can identify the interrelationships between them	<i>This is a useful competence to a degree. PARD field employers might be more interested in this competence than private sector employers. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. Alumni who work in private sector did not find this competence useful and/or relevant. They view knowledge and skill similarly.</i>
	<i>This is a useful competence to a degree. PARD field employers might be more interested in this competence than private sector employers. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. Alumni who work in private sector did not find this competence useful and/or relevant. They view knowledge and skill similarly.</i>
2.1 Students are able to	<i>This is a very useful competency. Knowledge is useful but</i>

independently find relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development as well as in a foreign language	<i>practical skills more. Working knowledge of a foreign language is extremely useful and one of the most highly valued competences among employers. Postgraduate students find it also useful for writing assignments.</i>
	<i>This is a very useful competency. Knowledge is useful but practical skill more due to its transferability and use in other fields as well.</i>
2.2 Students are able to process acquired information into a structured material, propose a suitable solution and defend their arguments in front of the audience	<i>This is also a very important competence that can be used in all fields. Knowledge is not sufficient. Skills are more important.</i>
	<i>This is also a very important competence that can be used in all fields. Knowledge is not sufficient. Skills are more important. PARD Department gives students plenty of opportunities to train this skill.</i>
3.1 Students are able to lead a team of people, create, plan and control tasks, organize workshops, and take responsibility for team results	<i>This is a very useful competence and all employers want to see this. Knowledge is not sufficient. Skills are more important.</i>
	<i>This is also a very useful competence that can be used in all fields. Knowledge is not sufficient. Skills are more important. PARD Department gives students some opportunities to train this skill (e.g. team projects and presentations). However, more opportunities would be welcome.</i>
3.2 Students are able to identify the causality of the problem relationship and its solution, they are able to design and defend the choice of adequate solutions, understand the complexity of the problem and its links to other activities of the organization	<i>This is a useful competence and some employers want to see this. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. This competence is also interesting for some private sector employers but usually more senior positions. Knowledge and skill is equally important.</i>
	<i>This is a useful competence and some employers want to see this. However, most postgraduate jobs available for fresh postgraduates focus on one particular issue, task or agenda. This competence is more useful for PARD employees at analytical positions or in managerial positions and/or agenda setting positions. This competence is also interesting for some private sector employers but usually more senior positions. Knowledge and skill is equally important.</i>
4.1 Students are able to identify the problem and the underlying context, can identify data requirements, orient themselves in existing resources and/or they can define data collection requirements.	<i>This is a useful competence but mostly at analytical positions at the ministerial level or in managerial positions. Alumni found it useful and applicable also in private sector employers. Knowledge and skill of this competence are equally important.</i>
	<i>This is a useful competence but mostly at analytical positions at the ministerial level or in managerial positions. Alumni found it useful and applicable also in private sector employers.</i>

	<i>Knowledge and skill of this competence are equally important.</i>
4.2 On the basis of an analysis of the problem using available software, they can explore the context and suggest possible analysis-based solutions.	<i>This competence is very useful for certain occupations that require quantitative and/or qualitative information processing and use of a particular software. There are some PARD employers that look for such candidates. This competence can also be useful in private sector setting. Knowledge and skill of this competence are equally important.</i>
	<i>This competence is very useful for certain occupations that require quantitative and/or qualitative information processing and use of a particular software. There are some PARD employers that look for such candidates. This competence can also be useful in private sector setting. Knowledge and skill of this competence are equally important.</i>

4.2 RESULTS – COMPETENCIES SCREENING BY EMPLOYERS

Table 3: Bachelor’s competencies screening by employers

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Knowledge - comments</i>
	<i>Skill - comments</i>
1.1 Students have basic knowledge in economics and management	<i>This is a very strong asset not only in the public administration and regional development (PARD) field but also other fields (e.g. banking, consulting, start-ups, etc.). Employers find knowledge of the two very useful not only in case of fresh graduates at the beginning of their career but also middle aged professionals. Employers can build on this knowledge and add new more specific sector-related or job-related knowledge. Economics and management in general are easily combined with other fields. It is possible to exploit the natural synergy between economics, management and other fields. Private sector employers are not so much interested in the PARD degree of study but instead consider University of Economics and Faculty of National Economy as a brand and a quality mark for graduates seeking part-time student jobs or first graduate jobs. This is because for such private sector employers, knowledge of economics and management is superior to knowledge of PARD.</i>
	<i>N/A</i>
1.2 Students know the basic mechanisms of regional development and understand the system of public administration	<i>This is the basic and essential competence for employers in the PARD field (i.e. government institutions). Also, it also useful for employers who provide services to government (B2G) – e.g. consultancies. Private sector employers commented that this knowledge can be easily acquired and hence it does not really put graduates of the bachelor’s degree of study in an advantage compared to other graduates.</i>

	N/A
2.1 Students are able to independently obtain relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development.	<p><i>This is a very useful competence both for PARD employers and for other employers. This competence is viewed more as a practical skill. In a world of information proliferation and information overflow, this is a particularly useful competence both as knowledge and skill.</i></p> <p><i>As a very practical and useful skill, it can be applied not only in PARD field but also other fields since ways how to obtain relevant information on a given topic is a transferable skill. Employers often use and test this skill as part of the selection process.</i></p>
2.2 Students are able to process the information obtained into a coherent, appropriately structured written material and present the main ideas to the audience using ICT	<p><i>Employers look for graduates who already have a fair knowledge of this competence and hence it is a strong asset.</i></p> <p><i>This competence is viewed by employers more as a skill rather than knowledge. Most interviewed employers ask staff to submit documents (usually written reports) and effective presentations using ICT are key in all employers interviewed.</i></p>
3.1 Students are able to acquire the necessary quantitative or qualitative data and descriptively describe the existing state and/or or development in a given topic	<p><i>Knowledge of this competence is very useful. Employers say that it is not standard that bachelor's graduates have knowledge quantitative and qualitative data acquisition. They say that having courses on data acquisition and processing and pushing students to write quality theses which use quantitative and/or qualitative methods is a strong asset and puts the young graduate in an advantage compared to his/her peers from other study programmes without such focus.</i></p> <p><i>Similarly to the comment on the knowledge perspective, this competence is viewed as a strong skill that makes the candidate stand out from other job applicants. Both PARD and private sector companies often operate with large sets of data and having an employer who already has the skill to work with it puts him/her in high demand.</i></p>
3.2 Students are familiar with basic quantitative and qualitative methods through which they can analyze the existing state and background	<p><i>Compared to 3.1, this competence requires further analytical knowledge. Employers do not often find bachelor's graduate on the job market who already has knowledge of this competence. This is usually the case with postgraduates. Nevertheless, it would be a great asset for the employer to have staff with such knowledge.</i></p> <p><i>Similarly to the comment on the knowledge perspective, this competence is viewed as a strong skill that makes the candidate stand out from other job applicants. Both PARD and private sector companies often operate with large sets of data and having an employer who already has the skill to work with it and use it for further analysis puts him/her in high demand.</i></p>
4.1 Students are able	<i>This is more a skill-based competence. Knowledge of the</i>

to participate in team work, understand the assigned tasks and contribute to team results.	<i>competence is not sufficient for employers.</i>
	<i>This is another basic but essential skill that employers look for. They expect applicants to already have this skill and be able to use it. All interviewed employers said that staff in their organizations engage in team work.</i>
4.2 Students are able to estimate the time and content intensity of a given task and identify resources for performing the task and understand the limitations that limit the execution of the task	<i>This is more a skill-based competence. Knowledge of the competence is not sufficient for employers. They not only want to hire graduates with the knowledge of the competence but much more prefer candidates with practical experience. Knowledge and understanding the limitations that limit the execution of the task is useful but employers prefer practical experience.</i>
	<i>This is another basic but essential skill that employers look for. They expect applicants to already have this skill and be able to use it. Some employers said that time-management is a competence in which millennials compared to older generations perform worse. Hence, it is necessary for the job applicant to prove his/her practical skills. They often ask about this in the selection process.</i>

Table 4: Master's competences screening by employers

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Knowledge - comments</i>
	<i>Skill - comments</i>
1.1 Students can analyze the problems of public administration and regional development also with regard to the broader context of economic development at national and international level	<i>Employers from the PARD field find this competence very useful – skills-based in particular. Knowledge is not sufficient. They look for candidates who are also able to “read between the lines” and “see the bigger picture”. Other private employers not so much. Nevertheless, the knowledge of how to analyze problems is a competence than can be transferred to other job fields.</i>
	<i>Employers from the PARD field find this competence very useful – skills-based in particular. They look for candidates who are also able to “read between the lines” and “see the bigger picture”. Other private employers not so much. Nevertheless, the knowledge of how to analyze problems is a competence than can be transferred to other job fields.</i>
1.2 Students have knowledge of multiple public policies and can identify the interrelationships between them	<i>Employers from the PARD field find this competence very useful. Higher positions within the PARD field require such knowledge. This knowledge is not important for private sector employers.</i>
	<i>N/A</i>
2.1 Students are able to	<i>Similarly to the bachelor's degree of study – this is a very useful</i>

independently find relevant information on a given topic in the field of public administration and regional development as well as in a foreign language	<i>competence both for PARD employers and for other employers. This competence is viewed more as a practical skill. In a world of information proliferation and information overflow, this is a particularly useful competence both as knowledge and skill. Perhaps most importantly, the fact that the postgraduate is able to find information in a foreign language is also a necessity for employers today.</i>
	<i>Similarly to the bachelor's degree of study - as a very practical and useful skill, it can be applied not only in PARD field but also other fields since ways how to obtain relevant information on a given topic is a transferable skill. Employers often use and test this skill as part of the selection process. Perhaps most importantly, the fact that the postgraduate is able to find information in a foreign language is also a necessity for employers today.</i>
2.2 Students are able to process acquired information into a structured material, propose a suitable solution and defend their arguments in front of the audience	<i>Knowledge of this competence is good but skill even better. Employers want to hire staff who are able to deal with problems, find solutions and defend/present them publicly.</i>
	<i>This is a particularly useful competence – especially as a practical skill. It is not easy to find staff who are good at it.</i>
3.1 Students are able to lead a team of people, create, plan and control tasks, organize workshops, and take responsibility for team results	<i>Knowledge of this competence is good but skill even better.</i>
	<i>Employers want to hire postgraduates with this competence. Such a skill means that the person is a long-term investment and can be considered for a managerial position in the future. It also means that staff are independent enough and do not require micromanagement.</i>
3.2 Students are able to identify the causality of the problem relationship and its solution, they are able to design and defend the choice of adequate solutions, understand the complexity of the problem and its links to other activities of the organization	<i>Knowledge of this competence is very useful for analytical positions in particular and employers do not often meet fresh postgraduates with sufficient knowledge of this competence/skill. Analytical units at ministries in particular seek candidates who possess this competence.</i>
	<i>Knowledge of this competence is very useful for analytical positions in particular and employers do not often meet fresh postgraduates with sufficient knowledge of this competence/skill. Analytical units at ministries in particular seek candidates who possess this competence.</i>
4.1 Students are able to identify the problem and the underlying context, can identify data	<i>Knowledge of this competence is good but skill even better. This competence shows a high degree of independence of the candidate which is something that employers want to see. This is a useful competence both for the PARD field and other private</i>

requirements, orient themselves in existing resources and/or they can define data collection requirements.	<i>sector employers.</i>
	<i>This is a very unique skill set and it makes a candidate stand out from the rest.</i>
4.2 On the basis of an analysis of the problem using available software, they can explore the context and suggest possible analysis-based solutions.	<i>This competence is based primarily on the knowledge of software that the student used during his/her study. PARD field and private sector employers have a number of posts for which they seek candidates with this competence – and it is not easy to find them. However, since software upgrades all the time, knowledge would not be sufficient. Skills are preferred.</i>
	<i>Knowledge of this competence is good but skill even better. It is very likely that candidates with the necessary skills to use a particular software will be able to use them and/or will be able to learn more quickly a new set of skills for new software. Both PARD field and private sector employers are becoming more and more automated and such a competence would give them a competitive advantage as an employer.</i>

4.3 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.3.1 Evaluation of programmes – missing competencies and framework non-alignment

Postgraduate students' and alumni perspective of the Bachelor's study programme:

Bachelor's study programme is overly focused on the „common foundation“ of general economics and economics-related courses (e.g. Economic Theory 1, Business Economy, World Economy, Finance, Accounting, History of Economic Theories). In year one there is hardly any course taught from the home department of Public Administration and Regional Development. Students are instead taught general competencies and economics-focused courses. Hence, the bachelor's study programme as a whole is not so much programme specific but instead educates students in economics-related subjects regarded as the „common foundation“. This can be viewed both as an asset and also a downside. It can be argued that students get a good economic foundation and background and after three years of study can make a more informed decision as to what they want to specialise in. Also, a number of alumni mentioned that having this strong economic background helped them to secure job placements in renowned companies that would not normally seek students of public administration and regional development. Alumni and postgraduate students would also like to see more practically oriented courses during the bachelor's study programme - focusing both on general competencies and programme-specific competencies. Most of the department's bachelor's students and bachelor's degree graduates continue with a postgraduate degree in the same field and stay at the department.

Postgraduate students' and alumni perspective of the Bachelor's study programme:

Alumni expect Master's study programme to be focused much more on public administration and regional development courses. Instead, the master's study programme still has similarly to the bachelor's study programme the „common foundation“ of general economics and economics-related compulsory courses (e.g. Microeconomics 2, Macroeconomics 2, Environmental Economics). Microeconomics and Macroeconomics in particular cause trouble since they are both knowledge-based courses and there are some issues with the quality of tuition and fairness of examination. Alumni and postgraduate students found most of the general competencies and programme-specific competencies very useful. It largely depends on the employer but for a postgraduate looking for a job in the public administration and regional development area, the competencies are spot on. However, many alumni work in other fields where programme-specific competencies are not so important. Hence, current general competencies are agreed upon and are regarded as being transferable in many different fields. Alumni would like to add even more skills-based competencies and practical-oriented courses and assignments since these were the most useful for finding a job. Many alumni mentioned specific courses, knowledge and skills that helped them secure a particular job. Alumni also appreciated the fact that the study programme offered them a relatively high number of elective courses. However, selection of these course is often superficial and students prefer “easy to pass“ courses instead of more challenging courses that could perhaps teach them useful knowledge and skills.

Employers' perspective of the Bachelor's study programme

Employers in general appreciate the set of competencies that the bachelor's study programme aims to pursue. Employers who seek graduate students mostly look for specific skills rather than knowledge. Many employers today provide their own training and hence knowledge can be attained even at a later stage but transferable skills are key from the very beginning. Hence, employers recommend to put even more emphasis on skills-based competencies and add courses that will support them.

Employers' perspective of the Master's study programme

Employers in general appreciate the set of competencies that the master's study programme aims to pursue. Public administration and regional development employers appreciate programme-specific competencies and they also find all other general competencies useful. There are some positions (e.g. ministerial-level analysts) that specifically seek postgraduates with the competencies that the study programme trains. Private sector employers prefer study programme's general competencies but they can also imagine that some programme-specific competencies and in particular skills-based competencies can be transferred and applied in other fields too. Similarly to the bachelor's study programme comments, many employers today provide their own training and hence knowledge can be attained even at a later stage but transferable skills are key from the very beginning. Hence, employers recommend to put even more emphasis on skills-based competencies and add courses that will support them.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS & CHALLENGES

To conclude, the Department of Public Administration and Regional Development is aware of the necessity to continually improve the quality of its tuition and student experience. The department carries out a number of internal screenings that are directed and evaluated both by the department and the faculty. Both the bachelor's and master's study programmes received generally positive comments in terms of competencies (both general and

programme-specific) – from the postgraduate students, alumni and employers. However, a number of challenges were identified and recommendations suggested:

	Main issues debated	Key joint findings	Improvement proposals
A	Bachelor's degree general competencies	Very useful – skills-based in particular but not enough courses orientated at such competencies.	Add more courses which pursue general skills-based competencies or include them in existing courses via new forms of assignments and different methods of tuition.
B	Master's degree general competencies	Very useful – both knowledge and skills-based. Employers from the field of study appreciate both, different field employers prefer skills-based in particular. Not enough courses orientated at such competencies.	Add more courses which pursue general skills-based competencies or include them in existing courses via new forms of assignments and different methods of tuition.
D	Bachelor's degree programme-specific competencies	Skills-based programme-specific competencies are useful not only for employers within the field of study. Knowledge-based less so since most students pursue postgraduate study and employers have own knowledge training programmes and options.	Add more courses which pursue skills-based programme-specific competencies or include them in existing courses via new forms of assignments and different methods of tuition.
E	Master's degree programme-specific competencies	Both skills and knowledge are useful for employers from the field of study – including some specific positions (e.g. government analysts). Employers from other fields appreciate skills rather than knowledge since employers have own knowledge training programmes and options.	Inform students on the competencies that can be attained through elective courses – in particular whether they are more knowledge or skills-oriented. Hence, students can make a more informed decision in line with their career plan.
F	Bachelor's degree curriculum	Most alumni do not like the “common economic foundation” but employers consider the university and the faculty as a quality mark – also because of the general economic background of all students.	Open discussions at the faculty level regarding the “common economic foundation” or forms of its tuition.
G	Master's degree curriculum	Most alumni do not like the “common economic foundation” and instead want to further specialise in the field. Employers	Open discussions at the faculty level regarding the “common economic foundation” or forms of its

		consider the university and the faculty as a quality mark – also because of the general economic background of all students.	tuition. Increase the amount of credits that can be earned via elective courses.
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