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ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS OF PA TEACHING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR PRACTICE –

***FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATION,
MASARYK UNIVERSITY, BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC***

***programme: Public Administration
(Administration Publique, MFTAP)***

The analysis of practical relevance of programme competencies

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Note: The report expresses an opinion of the author. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilization of included information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the project in this IO1 phase is stated as: “to provide data for an analyses how the PA curricula is linked to practice, and analyses of the gap between competencies needed in practical work in public administration and those obtained in the educational programmes.” I.e., we should assess the relevance of the competences of our programmes for practice – and our programmes differentiate substantially, if you scrutinize them, which means that we have also different competences listed.

Thus, programme competences are starting points. Not to mention, that needs for practice might differentiate. Furthermore, this output of IO1 serves also as **an input for IO5** (Methodological framework for development of competencies relevant for practice), finally as international evaluations of PA programmes and feasibility studies for suggested improvements.

Moreover, according to the arrangements, we should scrutinize and review only our own programmes, and, furthermore, **PA related programmes** exclusively (not as parts of mainly legally or policy or economics oriented but autonomous programmes; i.e., a rough benchmark should be EAPAA accreditation eligibility criteria – these criteria should be taken under consideration in advance). Scrutinized should be, if possible, **MA level programmes** only, due to the application’s theoretical grounds (*Staronova & Gajduschek, Brans & Coenen, etc.*), a more developed PA specifics competences on this level and more convergent state of the art to gain comparable results; and only **programme-specific competencies**, that is PA (in general, as stated in accredited programmes) are in the core study of this project.

This report is focused on the continuous full-time MA level programme Public Administration (Administration Publique, MFTAP) of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. It has been elaborated in the period from January to March 2019 and edited for publishing on the conference website in September 2019.

The structure of the report is as follows:

- First point summarizes programme development and mission as well as the structure of the programme and data on enrolment and attrition. Also, competencies are enumerated.
- The second part outlines competence screening history at the department, faculty as well as at the university level and main findings.
- The third part introduces methodology of the survey of which the results are presented in the final part.
- The report is concluded by the fifth point dedicated to concluding remarks and challenges.

1.1 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

1.1.1 Programme development and mission - summary

From the very beginning, **the mission** of the programme was to produce highly qualified universal graduates (generalists) who may find their place in public administration and public organizations.

The programme started as an annual programme called DFTAP in 1999. This reflected French annual Master 1 degree and Master 2 degree models. Later on, the programme was accredited by the national accreditation bodies as the 2 years Master programme providing graduates with two diplomas – French and Czech – on the joint double-degree agreement between the Masaryk University and the partner French University – Université Rennes 1: its institute IPAG. IPAG (Institut de préparation à l'administration générale) in Rennes is part of the Université Rennes 1 established in 1962. It aims at preparation of students for entry exams into French public administration and offers also courses focusing on continual education of French civil servants based on demand of self-governments. The staff involved in the programme MFTAP consists of professionals and academicians.

The content of the study programme has been innovated on a continuous basis reflecting requirements of the national evaluation bodies in the Czech Republic and France and decisions made and recommendations prepared on the University, Faculty and Department level. First changes were made in 2006 based on recommendations of the internal accreditation initiated by the dean of the Faculty in 2005. Especially revisions were made of which the aim was to reduce duplicities in courses and involve more practitioners in courses. The programme was internally accredited for 5 years in 2006. Other changes were made especially in 2011 and 2015. Some courses were merged or abolished and new courses were established.

In the following period 2011-2016, changes were made especially with regards to internships. A project focused on internships was realized from 2011 to 2014 with the aim to improve the internships of students of the programme in Czech public administration and public sector organizations using experiences from France which has a different culture of internships and much longer experiences (because internship is a precondition for entering the civil service which is not the case of Czechia). Another aim was to share and diffuse experiences of Czech authorities of which the internship practices and processes were developed more in that time. Also, a network focusing on internships have been developed and contacts on member public authorities have been used in a list with public authorities recommended to students for their internships.

Based on discussions with partners from France the programme evaluation was prepared during Autumn 2017, as the part of the new accreditation processes initiated by the University and its main accreditation body (Council for Internal Evaluation - the RVH) (within its institutional accreditation tasks). Following this, changes were made in the structure of curricula in order to

- concentrate French parts of the programme into the third semester when students of the programme are in France
- reflect changes agreed between partners of the programme concerning organization of this third semester - students are now required to attend lectures and seminars during the first month of their stay in France and the following two months as interns in public authorities

or public sector organizations. This enables better separation of the educational block and internship block of their stay in France

- to reduce the content of EU-oriented courses and related duplicities.

Following the changes in legislation on HEIs and their accreditation, that are described in more detail in another report prepared within the PAQUALITY project – Špaček, D., Nemeč, J. the report on PA education in the Czech Republic, February 2019), the programme was accredited by the Masaryk University internal accreditation body in 2018 and obtained the accreditation in August 2018.

1.1.2 Structure of the programme

The programme is a part of the education offered by the Masaryk University which uses the ECTS. There is a semester system applied. A semester consists of 13 weeks of instruction and six weeks of examination period. There are two semesters per academic year as well as per calendar year. The weekly number of contact hours for full time student is from 20 to 24 which is more than an international standard, but such extensity reflects the Czech reality

The curriculum of the programme is constructed with the aim to reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the field public administration and to reflect the programme mission. It is also determined by a strategic decision of the Faculty of Economics and Administration to have a set on courses on economics.

Students are required to pass a combination of the following types of courses which endeavour to absorb the most recent results of Czech and foreign research in the fields:

- **public administration and administrative law** – The core course is Public Administration I that combines theoretical and practical aspects of public administration reforms, organization and coordination of public administration in Czechia, civil service and its ethics, e-government and digitization of public administration and related administrative law aspects (including public tendering). Mechanisms of control of public administration are lectured (in theoretical and practical perspective) especially in the course Management and Control in PA that became a component of the programme rather recently – since Academic Year 2018/2019 – based on changes made following the evaluation and revision of the programme prepared for the accreditation processes organized by the University. The course Public Administration II focuses on the French administrative system and its theoretical and practical context.
- **public sector economics, economy and finance** - public economics and public finance are essential components of courses like Public Economics and Public Finance in CR and EU. The topic of public procurement is elaborated by the course Public Projects.
- **public policy** – the core course in this segment is Public Policy;
- **theory and practice of public management and its reforms** (the core course here is Management and Control in PA that is based especially on lectures made by practitioners – experienced senior civil servants from municipalities, regional office and central authorities).
- **economics**.

In the below table we outline the distribution of course ECTS in the programme. Because of too small number of students, the programme consists only of compulsory courses; students are required to obtain at least 120 credits in the programme.

Table 1: Distribution of course ECTS in years

Semester	Course	ECTS
1	Microeconomics for Public Administration	5
1	Macroeconomics for Public Administration	5
1	European Union	5
1	General overview and communication skills	2
1	Public Administration I	5
Total credits		22
2	Economic Aspects of European Integration	5
2	Economic Theory for Public Administration	5
2	Efficiency of Investments	4
2	European Law	5
2	Internship in Czech PA	6
2	Public Projects	5
2	Research Seminar	3
2	Public Policy	5
2	Public Finance in CR and EU	5
Total credits		43
3	EU Policies	5
3	Diploma Thesis Seminar 1	8
3	Internship in French PA	8
3	Public Administration II	5
Total credits		26
4	Labour Law	4
4	Diploma Thesis Seminar 1	16
4	Management and Control in PA	5
4	Communication and Managerial Skills	4
Total credits		29

Source: Author based on model study programme available on the Faculty web pages.

Except of the Czech-French nature of the programme, another unique feature of the programme is that **two internships required**. With regards to them, students are required to pass the course Internship in Czech PA (with 6 ECTS) and Internship in French PA (with 8 ECTS).

- Students are required to prepare final reports about the course and the results of the internship. This is supplemented by confirmation of passing the internship by accepting organization, and evaluation of them as interns made by their tutors.
- In case of the internships in France, students defend their report on internships in front of the commission in order to obtain the credits as outlined in the previous point. In case of the internship in Czech public administration / sector, they are required to participate in the

workshop dedicated to their experiences from both the internships that is organized by the Department every January.

Various curriculum components are used supporting preparation of professionals who are capable of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in the public sector. This is done mainly through combination of theoretical and practical elements of the programme.

In general, the emphasis is put on ex ante preparation of students for courses as well as on preparation of projects and seminar works either individually or in teams.

Also, the programme puts stress on direct **contact with practice** – this has various forms: lecturing of practitioners, focusing seminar works on problems from real administrative practices, the 2 internships, development of topics of final thesis based on needs and topics suggested by public authorities, and involvement of students in research etc. There are also special core courses dedicated to training of such competences – e.g. the Communication and Managerial Skills, internships, Research Seminar. Also, in case of this programme, practitioners are appointed as members of examination commissions of the state final exams. They also participate in defences of students' report on internships (this is the case of practitioners from French public organizations) and in the workshop focused on internships that is organized annually.

The advantage of the programme from this point of view is the fact that the French partner organization - IPAG – is oriented on practical preparation for French civil service and its lecturers who are involved in delivery of the programme are usually practitioners, not academicians / scientific workers.

The final thesis is usually prepared over a period of 1.5 years, in most cases under the supervision of one member of the academic staff of the Department. The final thesis is reviewed by a qualified reviewer, who submits his/her written review (preferably practitioner from the investigated area or scholar from other universities). The standard size of thesis is app. 60 pages (single spaced, font 12) and the thesis shall include theoretical, analytical and synthetic parts. Diploma thesis checks especially:

- the skills of formulating the research objectives, original hypotheses or research questions,
- the capacity to choose appropriate methods,
- the capacity to collect necessary information sources,
- the skills to analyse the gained information,
- the skills to formulate conclusions and proposals.

1.1.3 Student enrolment

The basic precondition for application for the programme is the bachelor degree. Student with any type of bachelor degree can apply for the programme, however, the entrance exam should be passed. The entrance exam is composed of the following:

- One test on general overview.
- One test combining questions on public administration, public finance and economy.
- French language skills are tested by a written test and interview with a commission.

Figures on students' attrition are evaluated on regular basis.

The programme competes for students especially with other study branches at the faculty – finance and business are much more popular, and also with similar programmes in the region and at the Masaryk University in particular (Faculty of Law and Faculty of Social Sciences). In this situation pro-active selection of future students is rather limited.

1.2 LIST OF GENERAL COMPETENCIES

The following general competencies of the graduates are expected among the learning outcomes in the overall description of the programme Public Economy and Administration as accredited in the present:

- Capability of independent identification and solution of problems
- Ability to communicate and present clearly in Czech and French
- Capability to ask questions and listen
- Capability of critical thinking and discussion
- Capability of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation
- Ability to find and analyse relevant sources of academic literature
- Capability of independent research work
- Capability to know necessary components of a research project and a research report
- Capability of working in teams, inc. international teams.

Based on the information on individual courses, the following general competencies may be added:

- Capability to conduct an evaluation interview
- Capability to negotiate
- Capability to communicate in assertive way

1.3 LIST OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

The following programme-specific competencies of the graduates are enumerated among the learning outcomes in the overall description of the programme Public Economy and Administration as accredited in the present (and as accessible on the Internet):

- Capability to understand main theoretical concepts of public administration, public finance and administrative reforms and their problems and limitations
- Capability to understand specifics of public administration and role of individual types of public authorities
- Capability to understand and apply general and procedural administrative law
- Ability to understand public management principles and to understand and make use of public management tools (from the area of strategic management, quality management and HRM)
- Capability to understand public administration accountability and the Czech system of control in public administration

- Capability to understand principles and processes of public policy
- Capability to understand and evaluate developments in important inter-sectoral fields like e-government, civil service and public procurement.
- Capability to make use of existing possibilities of external financial support for public administration
- Capability to understand project management (especially for realization of non-investment projects) and use methods for evaluation of public projects
- Capability to understand developments of the EU and political and economic context and problems of the European integration
- Capability to understand the system of European law and mechanisms of its application in the EU member states as well as developments in EU policies.

For the competence screening research within the PAQUALITY project the list was enlarged based on learning outcomes enumerated in description of individual courses (individual competences were defined also with regards to literature and other data on competences – especially Stare and Klun, 2018; Haupt, Kapuca and Hu, 2017; and Reichard and van der Krogt, 2014; IQM-HE, 2016; and list of competences of the Master's Degree Programme Administration - Public Sector Governance, 2nd Cycle, of the University of Ljubljana). The following list of competences was prepared:

Table 2: Programme-specific competences (enlarged list)

COMPATENCES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, ITS DECISION-MAKING AND MANAGEMENT	
1.	Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management
2.	Understanding of principles and models of fiscal federalism
3.	Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia
4.	Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and the role of individual types of public authorities
5.	Understanding of administrative law system and of Czech administrative procedure law
6.	Ability to apply administrative law and its principles in concrete situations
7.	Understanding of political framework of PA in Czechia and of public choice processes
8.	Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia
9.	Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control
10.	Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization
11.	Understanding of basic labour law
12.	Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering
13.	Understanding of French administrative system and administrative law system
14.	Ability to communicate about and discuss about topics and issues from the public sector in French
COMPETENCES FOR UNDERSTANDING EU, ITS FUNCTIONING AND TRENDS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION	
15.	Understanding of starting points and developments of European integration
16.	Understanding of organisational system of the EU
17.	Understanding of principles and system of European law and mechanisms of their application in EU member countries
18.	Understanding of economic framework of EU
19.	Ability to explain developments and trends of selected EU policies
20.	Ability to think critically about European integration
COMPETENCES FOR POLITICAL PROCESSES AND PUBLIC POLICY	
21.	Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy
22.	Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia
23.	Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods

24. Understanding of principles and tools of political marketing
25. Understanding of economic theories, their potential and limitations
26. Ability to use economic analytical instruments for description of problems and their analysis
27. Ability to use economic theories for explanation societal problems and the role of market and the government
28. Ability to formulate and defend recommendations for designing, implementation and evaluation of public policy
COMPETENCES FOR ANALYSING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING
29. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms
30. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector
31. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.
32. Capability to carry out literature analysis concerning existing knowledge on public administration / public sector
33. Capability to present and defend own conclusions in front of audience of experts from PA / the public sector
34. Capability of critical thinking about criteria used for evaluation of PA / public services
35. Capability to use methods for evaluation of public projects
COMPETENCES SUPPORTING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PROCESSES
36. Understanding of principles and processes of project management
37. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA
38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA
39. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services
40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA
41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA
42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA
43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview
44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application
45. Capability to use knowledge on basic labour law for preparation of documents and solution of practical problems
46. Capability to formulate and defend recommendations for experts from public administration / sector

2. COMPETENCE SCREENING HISTORY

2.1 HISTORY OF PREVIOUS COMPETENCE SCREENING ENDEAVOURS

Screening of competences has usually been a part of broader surveys that have been carried out within the quality assurance system on the Faculty or the University level. For a long time, the quality assurance system of the Faculty of Economics and Administration has consisted of the following components:

- **External accreditation:** Prior legal changes from Autumn 2016, study programmes were subjected to **national accreditation** by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Based on changes of the accreditation mechanisms, the Masaryk University obtained the called institutional accreditation and study programmes of the Faculty are subjected to **accreditation and continuous evaluation by the Council for Internal Evaluation (RVH)** of the university. This internal accreditation process was carried out since autumn 2017 till Spring 2018 for the first time and the programme was awarded the accreditation in August 2018. These internal evaluation processes also include **evaluation of external expert** which has a peer-review form (more information can be found in the second report – Špaček and Nemeč, 2019).

- **Student surveys:** Student surveys are carried out on biannual basis – students can provide a feedback on courses at the end of a semester through survey that is integrated in the University information system (is.muni.cz). The survey combines close and open-ended questions on value of education for students, perceived clarity of lecturing and quality of preparation of face-to-face education. Although the average response rate across all the programmes of the Faculty may be around 35 %, the response rate across individual courses may vary a lot and can be below 8 %, i. e. in case of small number of students in the Master level programme this may mean that only 1, 2 or 3 students out of the total 15-18 participate in the survey (and of them may be of the opinion that a course is beneficial and interesting and an opinion of the other may be completely different).
- **Alumni surveys:**¹ Alumni surveys has been carried out since 1996 (for graduates since 1993). Again, the scope of the survey is broader and there are individual surveys focusing on
 - employment of graduates (the last report from 2018 deals with graduates of the academic year 2015 – 2016);
 - perceptions of fresh graduates of Master programmes of the Masaryk University (last available report is from 2019); only in case of this survey there is a set of questions dedicated to competences that are not included in the survey of graduates);
 - motivation and expectations of fresh Bachelor programme students (first years of their studies; last report published in August 2016 and contains data obtained in 2015)
 - motivation and expectations of Master programme students who studied the Bachelor level at the different HEI (last report is from August 2018)
 - employment of graduates of doctoral programmes (last report from March 2017)

¹ Individual reports are available here in Czech: <https://strategie.rect.muni.cz/cs/studentske-pruzkumy>.

- candidates and entrance examinations (the last report is from August 2018).
- Since October 2007, longitudinal survey called “On the studying way” has been carried out every two years.
- **Meetings and panel discussions with employers:** This is not a formalised component of quality assurance system neither on the Faculty level, nor on the University level and as such it is not done on continuous and systematic basis. Employees of the Department for strategies of the University were consulted and they were not aware of any panel survey among employers. They referred to activities of the University Career Centre (<https://www.kariera.muni.cz>). According to its employees, the Centre organize events for individual faculties of the university that serve as a platform for panel discussion for employers. So far, such events were organized for meetings with employers from the private sector companies and the first event that will be organized for employers from public administration will be held in the beginning of April 2019. We anticipate that we will participate in the event.
Except for activities of the Career Centre, similar panel discussions have been a component of some individual projects, that, for instance, focused on internships, improvements of links between the university and employers etc. Public authorities can also provide the Faculty with topics of final Master thesis and such cooperation has started mainly with the City Office of Brno City.
- **Internal evaluations of courses** that are focused on reducing the level of duplicity and should result in the logical succession of courses. This is not so formalized part of the quality assurance system, but such evaluations have been done usually before the expiration of accreditation of the programme or as a consequence of important changes in strategy of the Faculty (e.g. the reduction of courses and face-to-face education due to decreasing enrolment of students).
- **Other internal evaluation activities.** For instance, on the university level a survey focusing on **early finishing of studies** has been carried since 2015 which has addressed to the guarantors of Bachelor and Master degree programmes from the university. The aim was to map perceptions on early finishing of studying and, also, to find good practices at faculties related to solution of student attrition. The last available report is from August 2018.

In the case of internships, every January a workshop is organized within which students present their internship experiences, contribution to the final thesis, etc. Their tutors from Czech public authorities are invited in order to discuss or present their experiences.

Important quality improvement inputs are provided by double-degree cooperation with foreign universities – the Faculty is involved in a double-degree project in public economics and public finance. A formal agreement was entered with the University of Rennes1 (France), University of Tampere (Finland) and L'Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro" (Italy).

2.2 MAIN FINDINGS AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

2.2.2 Accreditation by the university bodies

The accreditation of the programme by the university bodies is a rather recent topic. As already mentioned, the programme was awarded the university accreditation in August 2018 based on evaluation process that started mainly in Autumn 2017. Review of the programme by an expert

outside the university is a compulsory part of this accreditation process. The programme was received rather positively with a remark concerning definitions of learning outcomes and courses dedicated to research methods – in terms of their theory as well as practical skills to apply them.

Based on the evaluation obtained during the accreditation process and also based on data produced by most of the evaluations outlined in this report, the **proposal of the programme development was suggested.**

2.2.3 Student surveys

In case of a higher response rate, results of the student surveys are discussed within a standard evaluation interview between the head of the department and individual department members. This serves as a basis mainly for: the consideration of study programme innovations and feedback for the students (by lecturers responds).

The survey results served also for changes made in requirements on preparation of final thesis (since the academic year 2013-2014).

The survey on fresh graduates is the only one that also comprises competences screening. Only limited number of graduates of the programme Public Administration (MFTAP) participated. For instance, in the case of the last survey among graduates published in 2019, 8 graduates filled-in the questionnaire.

Based on the findings on student attrition surveys, specific positions were established on the University, Faculty level and also within individual departments.

2.3 BRIEF SUMMARY

In case of the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the Masaryk University, competence screening is usually a part of broader surveys. It has not been done on the programme level and is not systematically incorporated in evaluations made on the faculty level.

However, this does not mean that it does not exist. Relevant data may be found in external evaluations (particularly in feedback received during internal university accreditation – from peers as well as from the university Council for Internal Evaluation) and in data obtained through surveys focused on graduates. Competence screening has been more incorporated only to surveys focusing on fresh graduates and related set of questions could be more incorporated in other alumni surveys.

Changes in the programme were initiated especially taking into account discussions with the French partners (management of IPAG) and also with regards to feedback received from students. They also followed the aim of the programme management to reduce duplicities in the programme and reduce the number of EU-oriented courses.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the competence screening, the framework recommended for data collection prepared within the PAQUALITY project was used in the following way:

- First, the list of programme-specific competences was prepared as outlined in the above sub-section 1.3.
- Second, the list of programme-specific competences was used during adaptation of the suggested screening framework to Czech language. During this adaptation an instruction for employers and programme graduates was prepared consisting of the following components:
 - short introduction of the research and its aims;
 - instructions for commenting / filling-in the table with programme-specific competences, including the explanation of scales used - for this Annex 2: Competence Levels if the IQM-HE (IQM-HE, 2016, pp. 110-111) framework was translated and adapted;
 - in case of the template for employers, additional column was inserted into the table suggested in the template – “What level of competence of graduates of the programme would you expect? (please use the 0-6 scale)”
 - a table with the competences that followed the template prepared within the PAQUALITY project;
 - special page for recommendations for quality improvements of the programme; ○ special page with few sorting questions
 - in case of the template for graduates the following questions were used: When did you graduate? At what type of public authority do you work? On what position are you currently employed? If you have worked also at other public authorities, where? How long have you been working in PA? What new competences you have acquired thanks to your professional experiences in PA and on what level (following the project template, again theoretical competences and practical skills were differentiated)?
 - the following questions were used:
- Following the guidelines prepared within the PAQUALITY project, the method worked with the following **scale for expressing competence levels**: 0 – None, 1 – Threshold, 2 – Foundation, 3 – Interconnection, 4 – Contextualisation, 5 – Expansion, 6 – Generation).
- Because there is no official list of graduates of the programme working in PA / the public sector (this is not collected on systematic basis on the programme level), an email was sent to students that were enrolled in selected courses of the programme in the last 10 years already in November 2018. Their replies as well as contacts used in a different project (e.g. the Muni 4.0 project) was used for preparation of a preliminary lists of graduates working in PA/PS and then for selection of potential informants. A phone-call was made with these potential informants mainly on 7th and 8th November informing them about the research, its aims and a survey planned. Based on their willingness to participate, the template was then distributed. Data collection was done in the period from February 13th to March 17th. **Structure of respondents** is outlined in Table 6.

Table 3: Structure of respondents and method used

Graduates	Total		Their positions	Year of graduation	Length of experiences in PA (years)	E-mail interviewing	Face-to-face interviewing
• working at city/municipal offices	0						
• working at regional offices	1	G4	referee – department for EU structural funds	2011	8	x	
• working at central authorities	4	G1	economist of the international relationship department, Ministry of Healthcare	2008	10	x	
		G2	referee, Ministry of Finance	2017	1,5	x	
		G5	project manager, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	2008	11	x	
		G6	controlor, Ministry for Regional Development	2009	8	x	
• working at another public sector organization	1	G3	financial department, French university	2015	4	x	
Employers			Their positions			E-mail interviewing	Face-to-face interviewing
• working at city/municipal offices		E1	head of project department		13	x	x
		E2	referee, department for international affairs		16	x	
• working at regional offices		0					
• working at central authorities		E3	deputy director, department for EU affairs, Ministry of Finance		8	x	

Source: Author.

In total, 6 graduates and 3 employers participated in the survey as outlined in the table. Unfortunately, no graduate from a municipal level and no employer from a regional office joined the research.

Anonymity of respondents was promised in order to increase their willingness to participate in the research.

4. QUESTIONNAIRES – RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY ALUMNI

As outlined above, 6 graduates participated in the competence screening. None of them was impacted by the changes focused on reduction of the content on EU as well as creation of a new course focusing on public management. Since Autumn 2018/2019 this course focuses on introduction to public management and its reforms, role of public manager and, with involvement of practitioners, it deals with topics on strategic management, quality management, HRM in central authorities and self-government and coordination and control in PA (including audit). Since the same semester, course on public projects was revised also.

In average, graduates expressed that higher levels of competences had been promoted by the programme particularly in the category of competences for understanding EU and competences for analysing and problem solving. In case of these competences the theoretical level of competences was exceeding the level 3 (interconnection). Competences supporting public management processes were perceived as the least promoted by the programme, but as indicated, course on public management was introduced since this academic year. The data also indicate that graduates felt that they understood specifics and processes of public policy, but were not able to explain their developments in Czech public policies, neither they were confident about their policy analysis knowledge and skills and their knowledge and skills to formulate and defend policy recommendations.

The top-15 competences promoted by the programme according to the graduates are enumerated in Table 4. **Competences that were promoted the least by the programme** according to the graduates are presented in Table 5. In majority of cases, average opinion of the graduates was that they were obtained on the level between “Foundation” and “Interconnection”.

When looking at averages of graduates’ own competences, **particularly the following competences of graduates improved during their career in PA:**

- capability to independently create simple project and prepare project application
- understanding of principles and processes of project management
- understanding of labour law and capability to use knowledge on basic labour law for preparation of documents and solution of practical problems
- understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering
- understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control.

Some of the competences were also included in comments on new competences the graduates acquired during their professional life (see the Table 7 below).

Table 4: Top-15 competences promoted by the programme (graduates' view)

Competences	Knowledge	Competences	Skills
15. Understanding of starting points and developments of European integration	3,67	1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management	3,00
20. Ability to think critically about European integration	3,67	14. Ability to communicate about and discuss about topics and issues from the public sector in French	3,00
1. Understanding a theory and specifics of PA and their implications for decision-making and management	3,50	31. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	3,00
16. Understanding of organisational system of the EU	3,50	13. Understanding of French administrative system and administrative law system	2,83
31. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	3,50	30. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	2,83
4. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and the role of individual types of public authorities	3,33	4. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and the role of individual types of public authorities	2,67
17. Understanding of principles and system of European law and mechanisms of their application in EU member countries	3,33	15. Understanding of starting points and developments of European integration	2,67
18. Understanding of economic framework of EU	3,33	16. Understanding of organisational system of the EU	2,67
14. Ability to communicate about and discuss about topics and issues from the public sector in French	3,17	17. Understanding of principles and system of European law and mechanisms of their application in EU member countries	2,67
13. Understanding of French administrative system and administrative law system	3,00	20. Ability to think critically about European integration	2,67
19. Ability to explain developments and trends of selected EU policies	3,00	18. Understanding of economic framework of EU	2,50
25. Understanding of economic theories, their potential and limitations	3,00	11. Understanding of basic labour law	2,33
29. Capability of critical thinking about public administration, its functioning and reforms	3,00	21. Understanding of specifics and processes of public policy	2,33
30. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	3,00	2. Understanding of principles and models of fiscal federalism	2,17
3. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia	2,83	3. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia	2,17

Source: Author.

Table 5: The least promoted competences (graduates' view)

Competences	Knowledge	Competences	Skills
44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	1,00	38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	0,83
43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,33	44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	0,83
23. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	1,50	40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	1,00
38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	1,50	41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	1,00
42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	1,50	42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	1,00
35. Capability to use methods for evaluation of public projects	1,67	43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,00
40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	1,67	24. Understanding of principles and tools of political marketing	1,17
45. Capability to use knowledge on basic labour law for preparation of documents and solution of practical problems	1,67	28. Ability to formulate and defend recommendations for designing, implementation and evaluation of public policy	1,17
46. Capability to formulate and defend recommendations for experts from public administration / sector	1,67	6. Ability to apply administrative law and its principles in concrete situations	1,33
12. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	1,83	12. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	1,33
24. Understanding of principles and tools of political marketing	1,83	23. Ability to analyse public policies, their processes and impacts with use of various methods	1,33
26. Ability to use economic analytical instruments for description of problems and their analysis	1,83	26. Ability to use economic analytical instruments for description of problems and their analysis	1,33
28. Ability to formulate and defend recommendations for designing, implementation and evaluation of public policy	1,83	9. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control	1,50
36. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	1,83	35. Capability to use methods for evaluation of public projects	1,50
41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	1,83	36. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	1,50

Source: Author.

The data also indicate that **level of some of the competences decreased** – this was especially the case of competences related to the French PA system, competences related to ability to carry out literature analysis and, to a lesser extent, also the case of competences related to understanding of the EU. Most probably, this is the consequence of not using the competences in their jobs.

Table 6: Recommendations / Comments

Graduate (graduated in)	Recommendations / Comments
G1 (2008)	Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks to the programme I obtain capability of team work and work under stress • French education improved my capability to be flexible in unexpected situation • Competences obtained established perfect starting points Recommendation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of knowledge on functioning of EU law (differences between individual types, ways of implementation and application in CR in more detail) • Make internships as intensive as possible for students in order to see real processes of public policies
G2 (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training of PA – focused questions or proposals of solving a problem • Communication skills should be lectured during the whole semester, not in few modules • Reduction of duplicities in some French components (Evaluation of public projects, Public policy) • The course Public Project lacked practical part, including proposal of public project and its presentation
G3 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More space for internships in PA • More examples and case studies
G4 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would make the programme longer or build it from the bachelor level. The two years were relatively short for such a broad programme. In many cases there was not a space for more detail. • More seminars, many courses consisted only of lectures • I missed other foreign languages also. • Better interconnection of Czech and French parts (better continuation, better coordination) • French part was relatively small, but was rather intensive.
G5 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More practitioners from PA involved in courses, more meetings with them, excursions to various types of authorities, more links to practice.
G6 (2009)	I do not know how the programme changed. But if I consider 2009 as a starting point, I miss competences from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accounting in state administration and self-government • budgetary structure • public procurement For future I recommend also focusing on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • register on contracts • data protection (according to GDPR) • public procurement (tendering and control)

Source: Author.

Graduates also suggested some recommendations and this is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: What new competences graduates obtained thanks to their professional experiences and at what level?

Graduate (graduated in)	New competences obtained in job (level: knowledge / skills)
G1 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail understanding of functioning of the European law and its application (5/4)
G2 (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of EU's fiscal rules and its application during meetings with member states and EU bodies (5/5) • Understanding of EU's emergency mechanisms and eurozone (4/4) • Knowledge on procedures for preparation of meetings of EU bodies (5/5) • Capability to use French language for diplomatic purposes (4/4)
G3 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative management (3/2) • Process management (3/2)
G4 (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project preparation and project management (5/6)
G5 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of various documents (project calls, instructions for applicants, materials for training, guides etc.) (4/4) • Communication with clients of PA (conducting seminars, consultations) (4/4) • Coordination of cooperation with expert from other departments (in preparation of calls, evaluation of projects) (4/4)
G6 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of public tenders (4/3) • Labour Law (4/4) • Rules of subsidy policy (4/4) • Legislation on control in PA and financial control (5/5)

Source: Author.

4.2 RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY EMPLOYERS

Data should be presented with some precaution because only 3 employers participated in the survey and it was clear that they usually referred to competences that were relevant for their own position / department. This could be seen in levels they chose with regards to individual competences of graduates (some of them assessed only the competences that are relevant for their job / department and used the option “I do not know”) as well as in their comments and recommendations.

According to employees the competences promoted by the programme to the least were those supporting public management processes. Also, according to the employees, the graduates of the programme do not have higher levels of competences related to ability to apply administrative law.

The following Table 8 presents the list of **top-15 competences** promoted by the programme according to the employers. Table 9 enumerates the least promoted competences according to opinions of the employers.

The survey indicates that the **employers perceived the largest gaps** between the level of competences they would expect from the programme and level of competences graduates of the programme usually have in the following areas:

- administrative law (its understanding and ability to apply)
- ability to use economic theories for explanations problems
- understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control (especially theoretical knowledge)
- understanding strategic management (especially theoretical knowledge)
- understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia
- practical skills to formulate and defend policy recommendation
- capability to conduct evaluation interview
- capability of critical thinking.

Table 8: Top-15 competences promoted by the programme (employers' view)

TOP 15 KNOWLEDGE	Average	TOP 15 SKILLS	Average
3. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia	4,78	3. Understanding of starting points and trends of PA reforms abroad and in Czechia	5,20
10. Understanding of role and trends of e-government and public administration digitization	4,50	31. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	4,33
16. Understanding of organisational system of the EU	4,33	4. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and the role of individual types of public authorities	4,00
31. Ability to carry out literature research on state-of-the-art in the field of PA/public sector, their management etc.	4,33	13. Understanding of French administrative system and administrative law system	4,00
2. Understanding of principles and models of fiscal federalism	4,00	14. Ability to communicate about and discuss about topics and issues from the public sector in French	4,00
4. Understanding of legal framework of PA in Czechia and the role of individual types of public authorities	4,00	15. Understanding of starting points and developments of European integration	4,00
13. Understanding of French administrative system and administrative law system	4,00	16. Understanding of organisational system of the EU	4,00
14. Ability to communicate about and discuss about topics and issues from the public sector in French	4,00	17. Understanding of principles and system of European law and mechanisms of their application in EU member countries	4,00
15. Understanding of starting points and developments of European integration	4,00	18. Understanding of economic framework of EU	4,00
17. Understanding of principles and system of European law and mechanisms of their application in EU member countries	4,00	22. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia	4,00
18. Understanding of economic framework of EU	4,00	24. Understanding of principles and tools of political marketing	4,00
22. Ability to explain developments in selected public policy areas in Czechia	4,00	30. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	4,00
24. Understanding of principles and tools of political marketing	4,00	7. Understanding of political framework of PA in Czechia and of public choice processes	3,67
30. Capability of finding secondary data sources on the public sector	4,00	8. Understanding of economic framework of PA in Czechia	3,67
7. Understanding of political framework of PA in Czechia and of public choice processes	3,67	9. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control	3,67

Source: Author.

Table 9: The least promoted competences (employers' view)

TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED KNOWLEDGE	Average	TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED SKILLS	Average
6. Ability to apply administrative law and its principles in concrete situations	2,00	43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,00
37. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	2,00	6. Ability to apply administrative law and its principles in concrete situations	2,00
38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,00	26. Ability to use economic analytical instruments for description of problems and their analysis	2,00
39. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services	2,00	37. Understanding of principles of strategic management in PA	2,00
40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,00	38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,00
41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,00	39. Understanding of principles of quality management in PA and public services	2,00
42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,00	40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,00
43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	2,00	41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,00
5. Understanding of administrative law system and of Czech administrative procedure law	3,00	42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,00
12. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	3,00	11. Understanding of basic labour law	2,50
36. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	3,00	27. Ability to use economic theories for explanation societal problems and the role of market and the government	2,50
44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	3,00	32. Capability to carry out literature analysis concerning existing knowledge on public administration / public sector	2,50
45. Capability to use knowledge on basic labour law for preparation of documents and solution of practical problems	3,00	35. Capability to use methods for evaluation of public projects	2,50
46. Capability to formulate and defend recommendations for experts from public administration / sector	3,00	44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	2,50
9. Understanding of system, mechanisms and tools of PA control	3,33	28. Ability to formulate and defend recommendations for designing, implementation and evaluation of public policy	2,67

Source: Author.

In case of **some competences their level expected from the programme is lower** than the level of graduates produced. This is the case of understanding of French administrative system and administrative law as well as understanding of PA reforms in abroad and in Czechia.

Only one employee suggested some recommendations as outlined in Table 10.

Table 10: Recommendations / Comments

Employer	Recommendations / Comments
E1	<p>The programme provides good basis for starting the career, for fresh civil servants to be accountable. One can see lower levels of competences of graduates of this programme (compared to the levels provided by the second master programme). But their competences will be developed during the practice, it is logical.</p> <p>I recommend the following for quality improvement of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to focus more on law • to focus more on public tenders • to focus more on project management • to focus more on control (especially internal processes) • to use the Institute of Public Administration for better linkages to practice
E2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none mentioned
E3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none mentioned

Source: Author.

4.3 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What seems to have proved is that the method used allows for identification of **competences that**

- **are relevant for the position of a graduate** - they usually obtained higher value on the scale used for stating graduate's own (present) level of knowledge and skill. Similarly, also employers used higher levels of the scale for assessing competences that were more relevant for their department.
- **"atrophied" / worsen**, because they were not relevant for a profession and were not improving. Some of the graduates pointed out that they do not use some competences in their current jobs, but are happy to have them because they can always use them if they need them in the future;

When comparing assessing of competences between employers and graduates, one must take into account that in most of the cases the employers were not direct superiors of the graduates.

The survey indicates that employers assigned higher levels to vast majority of competences. This can be seen in all their categories, except for competences related to understanding PA theory.

If we look at the top-15 competences that were promoted the least by the programme according to the graduates as well as the employers, we can identify those that are enumerated in Table 11 (however employers and graduates views were not always similar in case of the level of competences).

Table 11: The least promoted 10 competences (similarities of views)

FROM THE TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED KNOWLEDGE	Employers; Graduates	FROM THE TOP 15 - LEAST PROMOTED SKILLS	Employers; Graduates
38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,00; 1,50;	43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	1,00; 1,00
40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,00; 1,67	6. Ability to apply administrative law and its principles in concrete situations	2,00; 1,33
41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,00; 1,67	26. Ability to use economic analytical instruments for description of problems and their analysis	2,00; 1,33
42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,00; 1,50	38. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of strategic management in PA	2,00; 0,83
43. Capability to conduct evaluation interview	2,00; 1,33	40. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of quality management in PA	2,00; 1,00
12. Understanding of Czech legal framework for public tendering	3,00; 1,83	41. Understanding of specifics of HRM and its activities in PA	2,00; 1,00
36. Understanding of principles and processes of project management	3,00; 1,83	42. Capability to analyse and recommend appropriate tools of HRM in PA	2,00; 1,00
44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	3,00; 1,00	35. Capability to use methods for evaluation of public projects	2,50; 1,50
45. Capability to use knowledge on basic labour law for preparation of documents and solution of practical problems	3,00; 1,67	44. Capability to independently create simple public project and prepare project application	2,50; 0,83

Source: Author.

If we combine the perceptions of employers and graduates, the gaps can be identified particularly with regards to these competences:

- understanding strategic management and its tools
- capabilities to prepare projects and understand and use project management
- capabilities to understand and evaluate HRM
- understanding of law on public tendering
- capability to understand and apply administrative law.

The programme should concentrate on courses dealing with these areas, obtain feedback from the last cohorts of students, discuss feasible revisions and implement appropriate measures.

4.4LIMITATIONS

Graduates Survey

1. The research was purely qualitative. On the other hand, quantitative research would be impossible, because a list of graduates working in public administration / the public sector is not available.
2. Programme content (structure of courses, their content and teaching and evaluation methods) have been changed few times. This could not be embraced by interviews with graduates completely.
3. Although much effort has been made to adapt the template to Czech language, the template still was rather difficult for some graduates and employers.
4. Sometimes it was difficult for respondents to assess to what extent a theoretical knowledge can be used in practice.
5. The programme under review works especially with learning outcomes and no anticipated level of competences obtained by graduates is defined. This makes it hard to assess gaps between competences obtained by the programme and requirements of practice.
6. It is arguable to what extent the methodology used allows for identification of gaps between competences obtained by the programme and competences obtained by working experiences.

Employers Survey

7. In case of the surveying of employers' perceptions, the research clearly indicates that people working on different positions in PA usually require and evaluate different competences. This may bias findings significantly and would require more in-depth research and larger sample. Only 3 employers participated in the survey.
8. In majority of the cases, employers were not direct superiors of the graduates who participated in the research. This also has to be taken into account when assessing and commenting the findings on the differences between levels perceived by graduates and levels perceived by employers.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS & CHALLENGES

The survey indicates that both – graduates and respondents – are aware of the fact that higher levels of competences can be developed in practice, this support the principle learning by doing.

Particularly graduates commented that the programme provided them with basis on which they could built during their career in public administration. The realized competence screening indicates that the gaps of the programme can be identified particularly with regards to these competences:

- understanding strategic management and its tools
- capabilities to prepare projects and understand and use project management
- capabilities to understand and evaluate HRM
- understanding of law on public tendering
- capability to understand and apply administrative law.

On the other hand, one must work with findings with some reservations. Especially these limitations of the research should be considered:

- The research was purely qualitative and the sample of graduates as well as employers is low.
- The findings are biased because they are based on averages. Also, the research clearly indicates that people working on different positions in PA usually require and evaluate different competences.
- Programme content (structure of courses, their content and teaching and evaluation methods) have been changed few times and this could not be embraced by interviews with graduates completely.
- Although much effort has been made to adapt the template to Czech language, the template still was rather difficult for some graduates and employers.
- Sometimes it was difficult for respondents to assess to what extent a theoretical knowledge can be used in practice.
- In majority of cases, employers were not direct superiors of the graduates who participated in the research. This also has to be taken into account when assessing and commenting the findings on the differences between levels perceived by graduates and levels perceived by employers.

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