



**Title of Report:** Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Switzerland

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## **1. Identify and describe the training program.**

In Switzerland, twelve research universities (ten cantonal universities and two federal institutes of technology) offer theoretically-oriented, scientific bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs. Professionally-oriented studies are offered at the nine universities of applied sciences and at the fourteen universities of teacher education.

All three types of universities have implemented the [Bologna declaration](#). In a nutshell, the Bologna Declaration goals are to (1) “establish a system with transparent and comparable degree programs, (2) create a two-tiered system of degrees (undergraduate/graduate), (3) introduce a credit point system (according to the ECTS model), (4) encourage mobility by removing the hindrances to mobility, (5) foster European collaboration through quality assurance, and (6) support the European dimension in higher education” (<http://www.kfh.ch/index.cfm?nav=3&&lang=e> accessed on 9 September 2011).

[Bern University of Applied Sciences](#) is one of seven state-funded, cantonal universities of applied sciences. It offers professionally-oriented studies at both undergraduate and graduate levels in engineering and information technology; architecture, wood, and civil engineering; business; health; social work; design, music, theatre and other arts; agriculture and forestry; life sciences; and sport. There are approximately 6,300 students and a staff of 2,542 (1,296 full-time equivalents). The university offers twenty-eight bachelors degree programs and nineteen masters degree programs. Courses are taught in German and French and partly in English.

The case reported here reflects one of many efforts taken by the [Faculty of Business](#) to implement the university’s internationalization strategy. It also describes the specific strategic goals set by the Faculty of Business in the area of increased internationalization. In this context, both the faculty members and the students are improving their English.

A special International Program (IP), which was launched in spring 2011, plays a central role in the internationalization drive initiated by the Faculty of Business. It is part of the regular Bachelor in Business Administration (BSc. in BA) degree program, which is offered in German. In the initial phase of the IP, all [core modules](#) of the second and third year of the three-year bachelor degree are offered exclusively in English. In a next step (as of autumn 2012), the program is to be offered in English from the first year. This course of studies spe-

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cifically supports the acquisition of a working knowledge of English in business and administrative contexts. Emphasis is on the transmission of applied management knowledge and intercultural competencies, which are in great demand among successful companies active in the global market place.

The IP, like all bachelors courses offered at the university, is based on the Bologna model, which supports transparency and mobility between universities of applied sciences. For Swiss students, the BSc. in BA program is aimed at candidates with a specialist or vocational qualification together with the Swiss Federal Vocational Baccalaureate or a higher secondary school leaving certificate complemented by one year's practical experience in a clerical or administrative position.

## **2. Describe the target audience for the training program.**

The program forms part of the university's endeavors to cultivate international relations within the context of its IP, providing practical, first-hand experience of intercultural communication by bringing together Swiss students studying for the BSc. in BA to work and study together with foreign students enrolled at the university. Group projects carried out in multicultural teams are designed to boost international exchange by ensuring that there is always a mix of participants, including at least one Swiss student.

The IP also provides excellent preparation for the exchange semester arranged for Swiss students at one of the many worldwide partner institutions. Students from outside Switzerland are able to complement their studies of business and administration, at their home university, gaining in-depth insights into Swiss business culture and administration.

In order to join the IP, apart from subject specific academic requirements, students must have English skills at level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Swiss students who have started their business studies at the university will have passed two obligatory Business English modules offered in the first year. (The level of competence in English expected of students entering the BSc. in BA program in German is level B2 of the CEFR.) For foreign students participating in the IP, it is the responsibility of their home university to ensure that they possess suitable (language) abilities for them to be able to participate fruitfully in the course. (It is the home institution that accepts the credits awarded to the returning students of their university.)

## **3. Describe the needs assessment procedures utilized to develop the program.**

A student survey was conducted at the end of the first year of studies in 2010 to establish both the experienced language needs of students in the first year of the degree program and the anticipated needs in the IP, which begins in the second study cycle.

With regard to lecturers' needs, individual assessments were carried out at the beginning of each coaching program.

## **4. Explain the English language training program's over-arching goals and specific**



**objectives.**

Within the context of the IP, English language tuition and support is provided for Swiss students and faculty members. This is, on the one hand, the TOEFL preparation course offered to students prior to the commencement of the IP, or as of autumn 2012, during their first year of the IP. On the other hand, the Academic Writing in English module was newly developed and integrated into the IP curriculum. This module is offered in the third semester for full-time students and in the fourth semester for work-study and part-time students. Both offers aim to increase the students' English skills so allowing them to better cope with the core contents of the modules they will be taking, deliver well-written academic papers in English as well as successfully communicate their knowledge and ideas in answers to examination questions.

The English language training program for the lecturing staff has a number of goals. These are to ensure that the:

- Quality of the core content modules does not suffer due to poor language skills on the part of the lecturers.
- Lecturing staff receives sufficient support for their efforts to further develop their language skills.
- Lecturers obtain sufficient confidence in their language skills and become committed supporters of the internationalization strategy and, for example, engage in lecturing exchanges with partner universities.

**5. Describe the teaching methods and training procedures used in the program.**

The Swiss core content lecturers are, obviously, experts in their own specific academic domain, and many of them are multilingual in two or more of the official languages of Switzerland (French, German, and Italian). Because of their academic backgrounds, most also have a good command of English, but may lack the confidence to deliver their own specific subject matter in lectures or discuss intricate content questions in English. Nevertheless, faculty members have come to see a growing need to provide lectures in English and have risen to the challenge. In order to help them achieve their personal goals in this area, the Faculty of Business dedicated funds for the translation of all IP course related documents (scripts, task descriptions, case studies, exam papers) and for the proof-reading of such documents written by IP lecturers who are not native-speakers of English.

In addition, members of the English language teaching staff were allocated to provide individual support to those lecturers who requested it. This support consists of individual, face-to-face sessions with university language teaching staff. A typical one-to-one session normally takes the form of the subject teacher delivering a lecture to the English language expert/lecturer, who asks the lecturer to elaborate on content when something seems unclear. The lecturer then responds spontaneously and elaborates upon what he/she has just communicated. This practice has led to increasing confidence on the part of the subject teacher regarding his/her ability to deal with spontaneous situations and to engage in discussions not prepared for and scripted in advance. At the end of the lecture, the language coach then provides feedback of a more general nature, working with the colleague on



those language aspects which need improving or "polishing" (e.g., delivery, pronunciation, grammar, collocations, etc.).

The English language training courses for students is conducted in the more conventional language classroom method of presentation, practice and production, whereby the relatively high level of the courses means that practice and production often merge i.e. very few 'language drill' activities.

## **6. Describe the teaching materials used in the program.**

In the Business English 1 and 2 courses students use two workbooks for individual self-study, namely Business Vocabulary in Use Advanced and Grammar for Business (with audio CD). Lecturers use internet resources such as TED talks, YouTube and online business publications such as The New York Times, The Economist, The Guardian etc. Materials are adapted to use with the different skill areas. An exam preparation book is used in the TOEFL course. The course on academic writing makes use of a mixture of theoretical handouts, developed by the language trainer, as well as examples of student work for analysis.

The coaching sessions for lecturers work with what the lecturer has produced prior to the coaching session. This may be a lecture/mini-lecture on their subject matter, handouts they are preparing for class activities etc.

## **7. Explain the content of the English language training program.**

In Business English 1 the focus is on business vocabulary and the scripts relate to

- The human dimension
- Quality
- Competitive strategy
- Marketing
- The Internet

With regard to skills, the focus lies especially on:

- Academic and professional language skills
- Researching and reading economic, business and management texts
- Listening to lectures on economic, business and management topics
- Discussing economic, business and management topics

In Business English 2 the focus is on business vocabulary and the scripts relate to

- Sustainability & corporate responsibility
- Logistics
- Company finance & boom and bust
- The global economy & intercultural issues

With regard to skills, the focus lies especially on:

- Writing skills, business letters and e-mails



- Research and presentation skills
- Listening to lectures on economic, business and management topics
- Discussing economic, business and management topics

The TOEFL course prepares students for the standardized TOEFL iBT test by training them in listening, reading, speaking and writing skills needed to perform academic tasks.

The Academic Writing in English course focuses on conventions used in academic papers and professional reports, such as correct citation, formal vocabulary, structure of reports etc in addition to extending their grammatical competence in English and their academic and business vocabulary. They learn to:

- Plan and execute an extensive academic writing project to a fixed deadline
- Transform raw data and research of others into standard academic prose
- Apply formal and stylistic conventions to their own written texts
- Reflect critically on their own writing and the writing of others
- Give and receive feedback in an appropriate manner
- Participate in the discourse community of English-language study programs

As mentioned above, the language training for faculty members is highly individualized, focusing on the lecturers' specific needs. This may be oral skills (lectures, discussions and debates), written skills (lecture slides, class exercises, case studies etc) or a combination of both.

#### **A. What written and spoken genres are covered in the training program?**

In Business English 1, students discuss extensive business texts that they have read and summarized as guided self-study. Furthermore, they are presented with techniques to argue effectively, speak assertively and listen effectively.

Business letters and e-mails are covered in depth in the Business English 2 module. Specifically, students are introduced to four types of correspondence (letters of enquiry, letters of complaint, letters of adjustment and cold sales letters). Students also research and prepare a 40-minute presentation based on the corporate social responsibility of an international company. Their findings include an introduction to the particular sector, relevant points from the sustainability report of a particular company, the critical evaluation of these points in terms of whether the company is delivering what it promises and the future outlook for the sector. They are assessed on language use, presentation skills and content. This constitutes 20% of the final grade.

The TOEFL course prepares students for a standardized test. Writing essays and short spoken responses to questions is practiced. In the academic writing module (ACWE), students learn the conventions for academic papers and professional reports. The training for faculty focuses on lecture and the production of support documents such as slides and handouts.



## **B. What communicative functions are covered in the training program?**

In Business English 1 and 2, students acquire and practice techniques to summarize written texts orally, persuade, speak assertively and listen effectively. In Business English 2 politeness and clarity of expression in written texts and the functional aspects of presentations, such as gaining an audience's interest and communicating information in an engaging and memorable way, are also covered. In the Academic Writing in English module, the way in which academic writing functions as a means towards and proof of membership of a managerial discourse community is emphasized. The functional focus of the program for faculty members lies in communicating content clearly, engaging in debate, managing classroom discourse in the English as medium context.

## **C. What speech events are covered in the training program?**

As described above, the main speech events covered in the program are discussions and presentations (student program) and lectures and debate (faculty program).

## **8. Explain the delivery mechanisms employed by the program.**

Two 45-minute face-to-face lessons are taught per week in all the student courses. Lessons take the form of interactive teaching broken down into group and pair work to discuss business topics and authentic business texts. The faculty program involves individual face-to-face coaching.

All language courses have an independent study component which often involves the use of the Internet and the university's internal online learning platform. There is no dedicated self-access center, but computer rooms are available.

## **9. Explain the assessment procedures used in the program.**

In Business English 1, Students are assessed continuously in the form of reading and speaking assignments, and at the end of the semester through a 15-minute oral exam. In Business English 2, students are assessed during the semester through a presentation and at the end of the semester through a two-hour written exam. Students in the TOEFL course sit the TOEFL iBT exam. Students in the Academic Writing in English course are required to submit an academic paper written in a group. The lecturers are not formally assessed but they are encouraged to reflect on their progress and set future goals based on the feedback they receive in the form of the standardized lecture evaluation process which students engage in.

The grades gained in Business English 1 and Business English 2 are used as a guide for entry into the IP. There is no specific evaluation of students' language skills at the end of the IP, but these seem to be a strong contributing factor in the students' overall success in the IP.

## **10. Explain the program evaluation mechanisms used.**



All modules within the BSc. in BA (and therefore also the IP) are evaluated by means of an online questionnaire sent to students towards the end of the semester. The lecturers discuss the results with students and conclusions are drawn for future improvements. The evaluation of the language training program for faculty is conducted on an informal basis through feedback from faculty members to their coach(es).

#### **11. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this English training program.**

One of the major challenges in introducing the IP has been to convince the mainly Swiss teaching staff of the program's benefits for students and teachers. It has also been challenging to equip the lecturers with the confidence, language competence, and skills to deliver their part of the program in English.

An apparently simple approach to the "language problem" could have been to recruit experts who are native-speakers of English to teach the core content modules such as marketing, accounting etc. However, it was felt that, if the organization is to become truly international, then all actors in the faculty need to develop an international mindset. Simply employing native speakers of English as new lecturers on the IP would be counter-productive to the policy of internationalizing the program. Native English speakers would most probably bring with them an "Anglo-Saxon" view of business and administration as part of their cultural baggage.

Moreover, business students need to be prepared for the real language of business, which is very often English spoken by non-native speakers, colored by different national or regional accents, imperfect grammar, and idiosyncrasies engendered by their different cultural backgrounds. In addition, the IP is also seen as an opportunity to equip the Swiss lecturers with the confidence to participate in a lecturing exchange program with partner universities and to present papers at international conferences.

The approach described above proved to be challenging to the language teachers, some of whom who were initially somewhat daunted by the idea of teaching English through a subject they were not experts in. (Some however, have double qualifications as business graduates.) Nevertheless, tapping into the lecturer's professional knowledge and expertise and having the language teacher as the language and communication expert and facilitator (rather than the provider of information) is proving to be a very effective way of achieving the desired results. Initial hesitation has given way to conviction and enthusiasm for all parties, now that they have experienced the value of the approach.

The language support services offered by the language teaching staff can also be seen as constituting the efforts taken by the Faculty of Business to support employee development – an important element of organizational development in general. Currently, staff of the Faculty of Business has priority status, but it is envisaged that such services provided by the language teachers are to be extended and made available to all staff members of the university.



**12. Describe the successes of the program and explain how they are documented.**

Students taking part in the IP already have an advanced level of English and continue to improve their skills through listening to lectures, studying course readers and written documents as well and completing written assignments in English. Lessons in the core content modules are typically structured to ensure that students actively take part in discussions, give presentations and produce reports related to specific business topics or projects. Students who undertake and exchange semester at one of our partner institutions also report that they have no difficulty in the courses they attend due to lack of English language skills. This is supported by the grades they obtain during their exchange semesters.

The TOEFL course can be rated as highly successful. 90% of the students achieve minimum scores of 90/120 which means they would typically be allowed entrance to an English-speaking university. This shows that their level of language is more than satisfactory to master the IP. TOEFL receives no ECTS credits, the exam is voluntary, however, IP students wishing to have their course fees reimbursed by the school need to attain a minimum of 80/120 points (i.e. 20 points per skill section)

Feedback from core content lecturers has shown that there has been a significant increase in the quality of the language of semester papers submitted by student students in the IP.

The Language Services offered to IP lecturers has become increasingly popular. When first launched in spring 2010, 150 hours in total were budgeted for support. This number has increased to 650 hours for the 2012/2013 academic year. Faculty and staff were informed of the Language Services and encouraged to make use of these. An ad hoc needs analysis is administered in order to match the goals of the individual modules with the perceived needs of the lecturer. Language coaches encourage the coachee to make use of the on-line Dialang language assessment tool prior to their first coaching session. Thereafter, depending on the language level of the coachee and their needs, regular sessions are scheduled. Typically, language-coaching sessions will include translating and / or proofreading of scripts, module descriptions, exam documents, lesson material. In addition, coachees could present their material (in the form of a lecture/mini-lecture) and mock role-play the classroom scenario with a question and answer session. Constructive language feedback is given together with tailored solutions for improvement; this may include for example suggestion to listen to audio documents or video's freely available on the web on their particular subject matter. The coachee together with the coach determines the pace and success of their language development. Meetings are held regularly to ensure objectives are met.

The Language Services are regarded highly by lecturing, research and administrative staff as it not only provides a quick turn-around but also ensures that internal terminology is used.

One of the main concerns expressed by lecturers when informed about the IP was





that student ability levels in core content modules such as marketing or accounting would drop in comparison to students' levels in the parallel BSc in BA program offered in German, the first language of the large majority of students. This has to date not been researched. Ideally, the Faculty of Business will undertake to formally investigate the impact English as a means of intuition has on core content knowledge and skills. Such an investigation will either allow the school to refute any possible negative aspects or, if need be, take steps to address any negative impacts English as a medium of instruction has on students' acquisition of knowledge and skills.

The fact that student demand for IP has not dropped indicates that it addresses a need of students interested in an international career. It could also indicate that word-of-mouth marketing by the first cohort of students enrolled in the IP has not been negative; some would say it has been positive.