

Follow-up report

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

06/06/2025

1 Positioning of the follow-up phase

The follow-up phase is part of the self-directed quality monitoring, also called the VARIOSO cycle (Explore, Analyze, Reflect-internal, Optimize, Reflect-external, Follow-up). The follow-up phase consists of a report by the programme on how it followed up on the review panel's concerns in the previous phase.

This report is the basis for the follow-up discussion between the programme (programme head, cluster director, anchor person) and the policy representatives (General Director and Director of Education (or fellow board member), Director of Education and Quality, process supervisor Education and Quality) and the president or delegate of the general student council.

Quality feature 1: profile, learning outcomes and curriculum

Questions/comments of the commission

Tips for the future

- ✓ The programme does not have an explicit, written-out vision and strategy. However, within the team a shared vision and ideas with regard to which goals they want to reach in the end are present. The commission recommends clearly formulating what distinctive elements the programme is aiming at and developing milestones to give direction to the programme development process.
- ✓ The current set of learning outcomes is a direct translation from the former Dutch programme. The commission hfelt that these learning outcomes do not function as a guiding tool for future developments. The BBM team is encouraged to use the backward design approach (which has already been used for the electives) for the whole curriculum. New learning outcomes can be derived from professional practice needs . We recommend limiting the number of learning outcomes and connecting them to the learning paths of the programme.
- ✓ The current design of the curriculum is characterized by a large number of small-sized courses. The commission encourages the team not to treat the structure of the programme as set in stone. Larger course units could provide more efficiency, more room for innovation and more possibilities for engagement of professional practice.

Follow-up by the programme

- **BBM Programme Vision and Strategy:** Development of draft vision and strategy text during a two-day retreat with the BBM Core Team (final version forthcoming).
- **Implementation of 2BBM Minors (4×5 = 20 credits):** Specialized minors with strong focus on career development and entry-level positions, in line with the recommendation to derive learning outcomes from professional practice needs
- **New 1BBM Courses:** Introduction of "Intercultural agility for business" and "Visual communication skills" as a direct response to BBM students' identified strengths with regard to multicultural sensitivity and digital marketing skills. The inclusion of Intercultural Agility for Business is grounded in research by Jozefien De Leersnyder and Ceren Abacioglu, which demonstrates that clearly positioning a programme as inclusive and culturally responsive at the outset of higher education significantly reduces study duration. This effect is attributed to international students feeling more embedded and supported from the start.
- **Enhancement of the Welcome Programme:** Further development of the BBM welcome day (one full day before the start of the academic year) focusing on community building between new and senior students. It is complemented by targeted **International Student Learning Path (ISP)** sessions in small groups, as well as an informative session with representatives from the Flemish government, covering visa **requirements** and **opportunities during and after studies**.

Implementation of commission recommendations:

- **Launch of 3BBM Minors (4×15 = 60 credits):** Full roll-out of the minor system, by which 2BBM students can choose to follow an introduction to two different minors, then, once in their third year, select one specific minor for further specialization.
- **Larger Course Blocks within Minors:** Direct response to recommendation to reconsider the current structure into many small courses. The 3BBM minors (15 credits total) are structured as three larger courses replacing previous elective courses that were only worth 3 credits each.

Quality feature 2: learning environment

Questions/comments of the commission

Tips for the future

- ✓ For the next steps to Odisee 2027 the commission advises to turn these good practices into a programme-wide educational vision, taking into account both each lecturer's authentic self and the shared learning principles which are

recognizable in each course. Discussing, finding consensus and in the end having a clear, shared vision, will not only bring clarity to the students, but also to all members of the educational team.

- ✓ A challenge for the team will be to ensure that all staff members are engaged in the process of creating an overall teaching concept.
- ✓ The commission recommends fewer assignments per course and more integrated assignments with more room for formative feedback. The first focus can be on the hurdle courses.

Follow-up by the programme

- **Analysis and Action on Online Learning Platforms:** Evaluation and optimization of digital learning tools. A pilot was established in 2BBM to support the minors. This year, 750 students (vs. 250 previous AY) used online learning platforms across four different courses. The primary educational objective is to provide students with additional practice opportunities to verify their mastery of course material. These platforms are designed to be continuously accessible, without generating additional correction workload for instructors. Strategic choice: the use of online learning platforms remains non-mandatory within courses (weighing $\geq 25\%$ of course points) to avoid external dependency on publishers.

Planned actions:

- **"Magic happens in the classroom":** Reduction of online weeks (6→3) for more face-to-face interaction, as part of cluster-wide shift toward increased on-campus education.
- **Enhanced Focus on Quality Group Work:** Implementation of maximum number of students per group (max. 5) in each course. Existing "peer grading" (anonymous) is expanded with a standardized template, in which each student is required to outline their contribution to the group; the group then submits this template with their group work.
- **Mandatory Attendance for Specific Threshold Package Courses:** For essential 1BBM courses (Personal Development Skills, second language besides English, Advanced Business English), mandatory attendance is introduced. Students in the first phase cannot always assess the importance of these courses for study success and the development of a professional attitude, hence this decision.. To support instructors, a pilot project is established to facilitate attendance-taking with a semi-automated process.
- **Student Workload Adjustment:** Better distribution of evaluation activities in dialogue with student representatives. The third semester of the BBM programme in particular has been thoroughly evaluated and adjusted due to an uneven and overly demanding workload.

Quality feature 3: Student mentoring

Questions/comments of the commission

Tips for the future

- ✓ The monthly meetings with the student representatives are needed to monitor the changes yet to come and to make sure that students are involved in the choices that are being made.
- ✓ Keep an eye on the mental health of every student. BBM students are strong and mature, but some students can easily feel isolated when they find themselves in a new country and environment. STUVO is an important service and while we appreciate that the specific background of the BBM students is being taken into consideration, these general student services are not always sufficient.
- ✓ We are happy that the two-hours onboarding has been turned into a full day, but there are also programmes that have an onboarding process of a full week or that organize activities for an entire year. The commission recommends the programme to think about how they can facilitate activities for students outside the onboarding day, so that they feel welcomed in our country. Students themselves organize a lot of activities, but it would be positive if the programme played a role in this. This could be in the form of social activities, English-language events in Brussels, administration or even student housing.

Follow-up by the programme

Planned actions:

- **Language Enhancement:** Significant investment in teaching capacity through expansion to 4 groups in both the Dutch and the French courses, 6 groups in Advanced Business English 1, and 12 groups in Personal Development Skills for guidance in smaller groups, combined with mandatory attendance.
- **Raising English Language Level:** For students who, despite having submitted a language certification upon admission, do not adequately meet the B2 language requirement, a mandatory remediation track has been introduced for the first time this academic year. The track starts with an ELAO test after completion of the ISP period and provides intensive support to both Flemish and non-EEA students.

Quality feature 4: Stakeholder involvement

Questions/comments from the Commission

Questions/comments

Although people who encounter BBM students feel that they have a certain maturity and motivation, it is not always easy for non-EU students to find their way into a (qualitative) workplace. Steps have been taken in the right direction to support students even further with a dedicated *workplace coordinator*.

During the showcase, it was clear that some lecturers are highly motivated to train students into business professionals, with a strong emphasis on soft skills such as punctuality, interactivity, ownership and mutual respect. However, skills like “*critical thinking*” are difficult to assess, both for students and for stakeholders in the workforce. Soft skills remain central to theBBM programme’s mission.

There were some questions about the validity of the 2nd-year internship (2-3 weeks) and the value this brings to students. This internship has been turned into a *project week* that can bring more value to both to students and the workplace. The Commission thinks that this is a step in the right direction for the programme.

Tips for the future

- ✓ Keep working on a black list of companies that treat students as cheap labour, but also keep a white list with qualitative workplaces where BBM students are welcomed for their internships.
- ✓ Reach out to more (international) businesses to create further long-lasting relationships with the industry, like the mentorship programme from WPP, IQVIA, UN, etc.
- ✓ Look into keeping track of the feedback received from all work placements to find re-occurring strengths and weaknesses to further improve the programme.
- ✓ The Commission suggests providing students with a list of interesting English conferences and events in Belgium for them to attend.

Follow-up by the programme

Planned actions:

- **Internship Adjustment:** In the 2BBM course Business Skills, significant time is devoted to CV preparation, motivation letter, and interview skills. For the academic year 2025-26, an intensive coaching track starts in 3BBM (September-November) to

address specific barriers students encounter during the internship. This new course is organized into 8 groups to provide significant support in small groups, tailored to the diverse realities of students.

- **Thesis Adjustment:** Transition to an iterative 5-step process (instead of 3 'gates'). Students first conduct targeted research on their internship company and map the competitive landscape. Only two weeks after the internship starts is the definitive thesis topic determined, with knowledge of the business context and the challenges they will address.

Quality feature 5: internationalization, applied research and community service

Questions/comments from the Commission

Tips for the future

- ✓ The commission wishes the programme success with its plans to collaborate with the CenSe research group in integrating applied research into the four minorse. This can offer interesting opportunities for both students and staff to engage with research within the BBM programme, while also facilitating community service. However, the Commission does not consider this a priority for the programme right now.

Follow-up by the programme

- **Internationalization through Foreign 3BBM Internships:** "Bring internationalisation home" established as a new pilot 3BBM course in the TOA. This course is linked to internships outside Belgium, with the objective to specifically adapt this preparatory track to international BBM students. For the 2025-26 academic year, partnerships have been established with AB InBev (Prague) and EPOKA (university in Tirana, Albania), both offering a significant number of internship positions.
- **Industry Partnership in 2BBM Autumn Project Week:** Collaboration with four leading companies as a direct implementation of the recommendation for more structural industry partnerships. Students received briefings from companies and presented their recommendations back to the companies within six days
- **Recruitment of EEA Students Outside Flanders:** Launch of marketing and recruitment activities to gradually welcome a larger group of non-Flemish EU students. Initiatives include the BBM participation in the SIEP fair for French-speaking high school graduates in Belgium, an online student fair in Czech Republic, and information sessions in Romania (Timișoara and Bucharest) as part of "Study in Flanders" (VLUHR). This generated ~350 leads for the future.

Outstanding Priorities

5.1 Short Term

- **Welcome Programme:** Expansion to semester kick-offs and "first 100 days" programme
- **Learning Outcomes + Evaluation Policy:** Complete revision in accordance with Odisee policy

5.2 Medium Term

- **Programme Efficiency:** Further consolidation into larger blocks
- **Cluster Collaboration:** Optimization of internship/thesis coordination and ISP track

Conclusion

Implementation of VARIOSO recommendations is proceeding according to plan. All five quality characteristics are being systematically addressed, with concrete results visible in AY 2024-25 and ambitious plans for AY 2025-26. The close alignment with commission recommendations demonstrates our commitment to continuous quality improvement.

The focus lies on maintaining BBM's strengths (international mindset, motivated students, practice orientation) while systematically addressing identified improvement areas (explicit vision, curriculum structure, stakeholder partnerships).