

REFEREE'S REVIEW

Program:	Master in International Business
Student:	Irina S. Kumerdank
Title of thesis:	CREATING WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES IN RUSSIA: COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis. Justification of the topic choice; accuracy in defining the aim and tasks of the thesis; originality of the topic and the extent to which it was covered; alignment of the thesis' topic, aim and objectives.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2
Structure and logic of the text flow. Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.	<u>5</u>	4	3	2
Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives. Adequacy of objectives coverage; ability to formulate and convey the research problem; ability to offer options for its solution; application of the latest trends in relevant research are for the set objectives.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2
Quality of data gathering and description. Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity adequacy; adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2
Scientific aspect of the thesis. Independent scientific thinking in solving the set problem/objectives; the extent to which the student contributed to selecting and justifying the research model (conceptual and/or quantitative), developing methodology/approach to set objectives.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2
Practical/applied nature of research. Extent to which the theoretical background is related to the international or Russian managerial practice; development of applied recommendations; justification and interpretation of the empirical/applied results.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2
Quality of thesis layout. Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense, correct layout of tables, figures, references.	<u>5</u>	4	3	2

Each item above is evaluated on the following scale, as applicable: 5 = the thesis meets all the requirements, 4 = the thesis meets almost all the requirements, 3 = a lot of the requirements are not met in the thesis, 2 = the thesis does not meet the requirements.

Additional comments:

Master thesis is devoted to University strategy development.

The author stressed that the goal of her paper is to investigate the role of Russian universities' collaboration with international business, i.e. international companies. But it is impossible to explain why national companies have been excluded from the research.

The main weakness of the thesis is following. The author doesn't reflect the hierarchy structure of the University: University – Faculties (Schools) – Programs, and, correspondingly doesn't differ the strategies of different hierarchy levels.

If you are going to write about organization strategy, it is no good idea to mention only one source of M. Porter in the reference list against, for example, six sources of R. Kaplan. First of all, it is necessary to identify University's (Faculty's) primary and supporting activities (the value added chain model of M. Porter) and find out where is in these activities the collaboration with business.

Look at the consequences (p. 42). The author writes:

Universities may follow several strategies to achieve world-class status.

Cost leadership vs. differentiation [Porter 1985],

International prestige vs. reputation (specialization) strategy [Brewer et al 2002],

International rankings and international accreditation,

Strategic university–international business collaboration, HEIs' strategic alliances and networks [Ramakrishna 2009 p. 18].

First strategy is a competitive strategy of a program from the University business-portfolio, and different programs can run different competitive strategy (it depends on their competitive environment).

Second strategy is very close to the differentiation strategy (as it has been described in the thesis), however if all programs apply this strategy it can be upped from the program level up to University level.

Third strategy is a growth strategy of University (or Faculty, or program).

Finally, in the fourth strategy have been mixed two absolutely different strategies:

Strategic university – international business collaboration is a strategy of University supporting activities (quality management, financing, infrastructure, and, may be, something else) but “HEIs’ strategic alliances and networks” is a growth strategy of University connected with the defining of its boundaries.

Nevertheless, since the details, mentioned above, are very often beyond the consideration of the majority of University executives too, we can close our eyes to these drawbacks and see an interesting and fruitful survey of efforts of Russian Universities to fit modern international trends in Universities development.

From my point of view, Master thesis of Irina S. Kumerdank meets the requirements of Master in International Business program, and according to the reviewer’s opinion deserves a “good, B” grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

Date: 11th of June, 2015

Referee: *associate professor*



A. Ivanov