

## **Academy Unit in Valjevo** **(former Valjevo Business School of Applied Studies)**

The Academy Unit in Valjevo, founded in 1979 as Valjevo Business School of Applied Studies, is the only public higher education institution in the Kolubara District in the west of Serbia. It is also one of the six public business colleges of applied studies in the Republic of Serbia. Until 2007, Valjevo Business School of Applied Studies was a higher education institution offering two-year study programmes. In compliance with the Serbian Law on Higher Education which came into force in 2005, it received the national accreditation in 2007, whereby it was transformed into a business college of applied studies, offering three-year study programmes and awarding Bachelor (applied) degrees. The number of students enrolled since its foundation amounts to over 20,000 and there are about 500 students currently studying.

The Academy Unit in Valjevo offers two accredited first cycle study programmes: Business Economics (comprising four modules – Finance, Banking and Insurance; Marketing, Trade and Tourism; Accounting, Auditing and Taxes; and Agricultural Economics and Rural Development) and Business Informatics. As of 2017, it has also offered accredited second cycle study programme in Business Economics and Informatics.

Focusing on the quality of study programmes and employability of its graduates, this Academy Unit provides a career-oriented and practice-integrated education enabling its graduates to perform a variety of jobs and tasks in the field of economics and information technology. Its study programmes are harmonised with those of similar European higher education institutions and tailored to the needs of the current and future demands of the labour market combined with a sound theoretical underpinning and therefore they enable students to acquire a superior level of theoretical knowledge and develop practice-oriented and employability skills and competencies necessary to fulfil the requirements of a dynamic and ever-changing business environment. In order to provide its students with practical experience, numerous cooperation agreements with companies and institutions have been concluded.

The Academy Unit in Valjevo strives to continuously enhance the quality of teaching and upgrade its study programmes. With a view to this, it encourages and supports permanent professional development of its teaching staff. The teaching staff is composed of 10 professors holding doctoral degrees, 6 lecturers and 6 teaching associates holding master's degrees and 2 PhD candidates employed as teaching associates, all of whom are employed on a full-time basis. In addition, it employs 5 professors with doctoral degrees and one lecturer with a master's degree on a part-time basis.

Since 2002, the Academy Unit in Valjevo has had fruitful inter-institutional cooperation with Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University (DHBW) Stuttgart, which has entailed the student and teaching staff exchange, exchange of examples of good practice, preparation of mutual projects and publishing of professional and scientific papers. In addition, the cooperation

with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) resulted in the project ‘Application Oriented Curricula in Business Colleges of Applied Studies in Serbia’, supported by GIZ and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and leading to the modernisation of this unit’s curricula. The Academy Unit in Valjevo also participated as a partner in one Erasmus+ KA1 project.

With a view to continuously modernising the teaching and learning process, this Academy Unit applies modern methods and technologies in teaching and learning. For almost a decade it has been using the Moodle learning platform for e-learning, which complements the traditional teaching by enabling its lecturers to publish and share teaching materials, multimedia content and assignments with students, and facilitates communication between the lecturers and students.

Besides the educational activities, the Academy Unit in Valjevo has its R&D Centre, which provides professional development trainings and courses to other institutions, companies and employed individuals, as well as advisory services and project development. In 2017, this institution fulfilled special conditions and criteria in terms of programmes, teaching staff, space and equipment prescribed by the Law on Adult Education and acquired the status of publicly recognized adult education organizer. It offers approved non-formal adult education programmes in foreign languages, accounting, bookkeeping and digital literacy.

Aiming to fulfil the requirements and expectations of the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century students, the Academy Unit in Valjevo, which occupies an area of about 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, offers fully equipped lecture halls and classrooms, several computer laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment, a library and a students’ club, thus providing its students and staff with an inspiring educational environment.