



B I S L A
Liberal Arts College



DLHODOBÝ ZÁMER

2024-2030

www.bisla.sk



CONTENTS

PREAMBLE 3

Strategic Development Areas 4

Mission and Vision 2024 - 2030 4

Mission 4

Vision 5

1. Quality assessment 5

2. Students need 6

3. BISLA Teaching 7

4. Science 8

5. Internationalization of studies 9

6. Material and technical support 10

7. BISLA partners 11

8. Ethics 11

9. Identity 12

PREAMBLE

The strategic goal of the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (hereinafter referred to as BISLA) is to provide quality education in the field of political science in English at the undergraduate level. BISLA considers the academic freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, especially the freedom of education and scientific research, as well as autonomy and independence, to be the key principles of its functioning. Equally important is strong academic self-government and the application of ethical principles in the scientific and pedagogical work of the teaching staff as well as in the way BISLA is managed. This is the only way to achieve the creative and free atmosphere necessary for the quality development of the university.

The Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA), based in Bratislava, received state approval for its operation and accreditation of its Bachelor's degree in Political Science in June 2006 and started its activities in September 2006.

Preparations for the founding of BISLA took a decade, as the founders were active in a civic association called the Select Educational Society (VVS). Since 1996, the VVS has created a wide network of academic and non-academic professionals who have provided teaching and mentoring in a three-year complementary education programme designed for talented and motivated social science students at Slovak universities. This complementary education programme avoided the tradition of narrow specialisation characteristic of graduate education throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The project of the Bratislava International School of Liberal Studies (BISLA) was based on the experience gained in the activities of the VVS. The founders of BISLA concluded that political philosophy and political science would be studied at BISLA in relation to a broad spectrum of social sciences and humanities: philosophy, social anthropology, history, sociology and art theory. At the same time as BISLA, the Bratislava Institute of Humanities n.o. (BIH) has been established to organize public discussions and lectures on key intellectual, social and political issues in Slovakia and the contemporary world.

Since 1996, VVS has also published the Slovak-English journal *Kritika & Kontext*; in 2006 the journal was taken over by the Institute of Humanism in cooperation with BISLA. The journal *Kritika & Kontext* publishes Slovak and foreign experts debating contemporary intellectual issues. At the same time, BISLA students publish their own journal, *Il Ponte*.

Since its beginnings, BISLA has given priority to quality over quantity and has shaped itself as a university with a limited number of students and a reasonable number of teachers. BISLA obtains its resources for its activities from grants, tuition fees and contributions from private entities. BISLA students are predominantly Slovak citizens, but prospective students from abroad are equally welcome, and citizens of the USA, Canada, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Hungary, Czech Republic, Italy, and Germany have studied at BISLA. Students from China (Hong Kong), Japan, Italy have been on exchange at BISLA. Most of the courses within the study programme at BISLA were taught in English (currently all courses are taught in English) in order to prepare BISLA graduates to continue their education both in Slovakia, as well as abroad, or for positions requiring a bachelor's degree. The BISLA study programme is based on small-group seminars, lectures and a system of academic advisors, as well as on gaining work experience while still studying. The main emphasis is on constant intellectual interaction among students with each other and between students and instructors during and outside of class. At the same time, BISLA as a university and as an intellectual community is active in the field of scientific research and scholarly publishing.

BISLA seeks to continuously strengthen its background as a private university by working closely within the European Network of European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS), in the establishment and activities of which it is actively involved.

BISLA aims to continuously improve its quality at institutional, national and global level, for which reason it sets and monitors annually its Long-Term Goal and its individual indicators. The areas BISLA has defined in its Long-Term Plan 2024-2030 are an integral part of its internal quality assurance system and reflect national as well as international requirements, in particular the requirements of the Higher Education Act, the Quality Assurance Act and the standards of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as SAAVŠ) and ESG 2015.

BISLA has set strategic objectives in nine areas within the Long-term Plan 2024-2030:

Areas for strategic development

- 1) Quality assessment
- 2) Student needs
- 3) BISLA Teaching
- 4) Science
- 5) Internationalisation of studies
- 6) Material and technical support
- 7) BISLA partners
- 8) Ethics
- 9) Identity

Mission and Vision 2024-2030

Mission

BISLA strives to provide its students with an excellent education that will become the foundation for their professional careers, personal well-being, as well as an awareness of moral values and ethical standards that are a prerequisite to becoming responsible citizens of their community, whether local or global.

BISLA continues the tradition of modern liberal studies and the sciences, which we believe are the best way to provide adequate education and learning of the intellectual skills necessary for students to become creative and critical thinkers in the 21st century knowledge economy and to engage meaningfully in today's culturally and politically diverse world.

BISLA seeks to promote Liberal Studies education in Europe - as the most efficient way of allocating resources within higher education - the time, effort and skills of students on the one hand, and the funding and benefits offered by governments, businesses and society at large on the other.

Vision

Our vision is for universities to provide an adequate education that equips leaders with the skills to succeed in a diverse world, to deliver long-term solutions to local and global problems, and to contribute to the healthy and democratic development of a society that values peace and a sustainable quality of life for all people.

We also believe that the true purpose of education is not just to secure a job - education is important in its own right as a pathway to a meaningful life, to understand world events, and to appreciate and draw energy from the diversity of art and culture that our civilization has created over millennia.

Strategic area

1. Quality assessment

BISLA implements an internal system for quality assurance of education and ensures that the criteria for evaluating the quality of the internal system and the quality of the study programme are in accordance with the SAAVS Methodology for the Evaluation of Standards. BISLA carries out periodic evaluation and assessment of the quality of the study programme and prepares internal evaluation reports of the study programme. BISLA ensures the participation of student representatives in the quality assurance structures as well as the participation of professional organisations, employers and/or other practitioners in the quality assurance structures. The report on the evaluation of the level in educational activities is prepared by the Internal Quality Board in cooperation with the BISLA Accreditation Board and approved by the BISLA Academic Senate. The report also includes an evaluation of student feedback on satisfaction with the quality of education. BISLA also regularly monitors feedback from faculty and individual staff members in order to improve the working environment at BISLA. BISLA strives to achieve maximum efficiency and satisfaction of its employees.

BISLA is committed to work continuously in the coming years to develop and maintain the internal quality system and to improve the current quality control mechanisms. BISLA plans to streamline the collection and processing of student, staff and alumni data by reforming individual questionnaires.

Strategic area indicators

- Creation of standardised feedback forms reflecting national and international requirements,
- Conduct at least once a year a feedback exercise with staff and students in the area of quality assurance at the college, including its evaluation together with stakeholders,
- At least once a year, conduct feedback with students on the quality of the curriculum, including its evaluation together with stakeholders,
- Implementation of internal evaluation reports of the study programme,
- Implementation of evaluation reports on the level of educational activities,
- Ensuring participation of students, staff and other external entities in the decision making bodies of the college.

2. Student needs

BISLA strives for inclusive access to education for its students regardless of their age, gender, gender identification, race, creed or religion, political opinion, disability, social origin, wealth or membership of a nationality or ethnic group or other differences.

BISLA produces high quality and desirable graduates. BISLA prepares graduates able to use their education and skills in diverse areas of public life and able to respond to the dynamically evolving needs of society. BISLA ensures the effective participation of students in the education and governance of the school, ensures the participation of student representatives in the school's governing bodies, ensures the participation of student representatives in structures that propose modifications to the existing curriculum, its approval and evaluation.

BISLA ensures that all information about the curriculum, teaching methods, forms and criteria of assessment are made known to students in advance. BISLA promotes modern student-centred-learning pedagogical approaches; systematically obtains and evaluates feedback from students at different levels of study and graduates through surveys and questionnaires and uses it in measures to improve the quality of education. BISLA regularly evaluates and revises policies, forms and methods of teaching, learning and assessment to take account of the diversity of learners and their needs and to identify and improve ineffective forms. BISLA supports the creation and updating of learning literature and the expansion and rationalisation of the range of information resources available, including the promotion of internationally recognised teaching texts, databases and licences. BISLA is innovating the admissions process with the aim of minimising the administrative burden on applicants and maximising the use of electronic forms. BISLA places emphasis on the continuous improvement of students' social conditions. BISLA encourages the development of counselling and study support, especially in times of crisis during studies; by awarding scholarships and prizes to outstanding students, it supports the motivation of students to achieve excellent academic results and to represent BISLA in extra-curricular activities; it supports existing student organisations, foundations and societies and encourages the creation of new ones.

BISLA has a comprehensive student support system, which is covered by the BISLA TLC. First and foremost, every male and female student is assigned an academic advisor or counselor. These individuals are from the BISLA teaching staff and accompany students throughout their studies at BISLA. This part of the support system focuses on the academic life of the student (course selection, grades, feedback from the teaching team, absences, choice of internship/semester abroad, etc.). Another part of the BISLA student support system is peer mentoring. Within this, each first year student is assigned a person from the senior year. Through this mentoring system, BISLA seeks to ensure an easier transition from high school to college. The final form of mentoring is alumni mentoring, in which a current student can request to be mentored by an alumnus. Such pairs focus primarily on guiding the transition process to "life after BISLA." In other words, alumni mentoring focuses, for example, on advising on the choice of a Master's degree, a deeper focus on a specific topic that is not addressed by BISLA for capacity reasons, a partnership in research work, and so on. Last but not least, the BISLA TLC also covers a writing centre, where trained individuals from the student body (writing tutors) are dedicated to supporting and assisting students with academic writing issues.

BISLA develops care for students with specific needs, systematically reinforces its profile as an inclusive institution that has an open space for students with specific needs, builds a universally accessible academic environment opening access to and successful completion of studies to students with disabilities.

Strategic area indicators

- Systematic education of second and third year students on mentoring issues,
- Preparation of educational materials on mentoring issues for students and alumni,
- Systematic training of Writing Centre tutors on educational techniques as well as deepening knowledge and skills within academic writing,
- Creation of an online platform with educational materials on academic writing, which would be accessible not only to BISLA students but also to non-BISLA students,
- Hiring an in-house expert to be in charge of the agenda of students with specific needs,
- Enhancing an inclusive environment for students with specific needs, - Developing contacts with alumni, in particular encouraging the formation and development of alumni clubs; inviting alumni to collaborate in the search for future students,
- Providing office packages for students and training in the use of these applications and programs,
- Improving technical facilities for students and creating a more modern learning environment,
- Conduct student satisfaction feedback collection at least once a year.

3. BISLA Teaching

The teaching staff working at BISLA systematically develops the quality of the education provided through highlighting current issues in society, the current state of research and also the research activities of individual BISLA teachers. BISLA teaching staff is defined as an internal member of staff (usually an assistant, associate or full professor) or an external member of staff, who in this case may also be a practitioner with significant experience. Teaching staff carry out their research independently, determining their own orientation in teaching. It creates optimal conditions for basic, applied and multidisciplinary research. BISLA promotes scientific collaboration with other top institutes both at home and abroad. BISLA responds to the societal demand for quality education that focuses on critical thinking, argumentation, independence and the ability to work with theoretical sources, statistics and data. Education at BISLA also focuses on the acquisition of practical skills and the ability to work in a team. BISLA pays attention to regular evaluation of the quality of the curriculum and ensures that individual courses reflect the latest scientific knowledge and the requirements of practice. BISLA develops cooperation with partners at home and abroad - with students, scientific and scientific-pedagogical institutions, state and public institutions, territorial and interest self-government, employers, business entities, interest associations, non-profit sector. BISLA actively communicates with the public through various public debates, lectures, workshops and other forms of communication. BISLA's activities and intentions are not linked to any political force, centre or orientation. The College encourages student involvement in all curriculum-related processes in research activities, organizes student scientific conferences, and encourages student participation in national and international scientific, artistic, and practice-oriented competitions. BISLA maintains and develops good relations with partner organisations in which or in cooperation with which practical education of students takes place; takes care to ensure the active participation of students, professional organisations, employers and other practitioners in the

quality assurance of education; motivates its students and staff to carry out activities that are subject to quality assessment according to internal, national and international standards. BISLA regularly collects and evaluates student feedback on their satisfaction with the quality of education provided.

BISLA supports the professional development of the teaching skills and abilities of the teaching team. In 2022, the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) was established at BISLA, which included among its activities training workshops for the teaching staff on various topics related to education. As part of quality assurance and improvement, peer supervision sessions were also introduced during which trained coaches visit individual teachers during their lessons and give them feedback on their learning process.

Strategic area indicators

- Orientation for incoming educators focused not only on educational knowledge and skills, but also an introduction to the workings of BISLA,
- Development of student-teaching partnerships during which the teaching staff would be paired with students who would participate in the teaching person's scholarly research activities as well as in the preparation/feedback on the preparation of individual courses,
- Continuation and development of hospitalizations: Hospitalizations with subsequent feedback are ongoing for all new teaching staff. Peer hospitalizations with other teacher educators will be strengthened with opportunities for mentoring longer-term collaborations, multiple hospitalizations within a single course, consultations, and thematic working groups organized by the TLC to improve teaching skills and competencies,
- Feedback from teachers on an annual basis, including feedback on satisfaction with the quality of the working environment and conditions and support from the school - Establish long-term and systematic coordination among teacher leaders - Improve technical facilities for teachers and create better facilities (common areas) for teachers.

4. Science

BISLA bears institutional responsibility for the quality of scientific research and other creative activities and for their continuous development; it applies policies to ensure the quality of scientific research activities and systematically evaluates quality in the sense of the university's internal quality assurance system. Regularly evaluates and develops its internal quality assurance system for science and research. The outputs of creative activities are evaluated according to predetermined criteria-originality, rigor and impact of the output as well as the level of quality. BISLA supports the implementation of seminars, symposia, workshops and other scientific and professional meetings for students, staff, professionals and the general public.

Through publications for the wider public, BISLA publishes popularisation articles, blogs, collaborates with the media, reports on the latest scientific knowledge and organises discussion meetings. BISLA encourages the staff to participate in scientific research projects and tries as far as possible to allow them to participate in domestic and international grants related to their scientific research activities. BISLA regularly encourages the working group to link their scientific research activities in order to improve the quality of the education provided and to enhance the quality of the individuals in the working group. BISLA publishes all information about current research and collaborations of individual staff members on the School's website.

The Endeavour Foundation provides BISLA with an annual grant that enables us to support scientific research activities and to carry out various projects. One of these projects is The Liberal Herald conference, which we organise annually and from which we publish proceedings under the imprint of Kritika a Kontext. The conference (The Liberal Herald) focuses on a variety of topics in the humanities and social sciences, and we regularly invite scholars and practitioners from around the world to present and discuss our scholarly work. Critique and Context is a cultural and social journal focused on reflecting on and analysing contemporary culture and society in this country and abroad. The journal focuses on topics such as literature, theatre, film, visual arts, architecture, music, philosophy, social history, sociology and politics. The magazine regularly features essays, studies, reviews, interviews and discussions with prominent personalities from the world of culture and society. The editorial board of the journal consists of prominent Slovak intellectuals and experts in various fields who strive to bring current and relevant topics from different areas. In addition, the journal also seeks international cooperation and foreign contributions.

In the period 2023-2028, BISLA plans to contribute more regularly and produce periodical issues on current research projects of BISLA faculty and researchers. Publication activities for Critique and Context are closely related to The Liberal Herald, a periodic conference hosted at BISLA by our scholars and educators. BISLA also plans to work on developing the platform and transforming The Liberal Herald conference into an interdisciplinary platform that would open up space for students and the wider public to participate in a variety of workshops, training sessions and interactive lectures.

Strategic area indicators

- Initiate and participate in research and quality improvement projects,
- Introduce a system for recording publication activity at the college,
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of research activities of internal staff,
- Encourage the initiative of internal staff in engaging in grant activities, - Actively participate in international conferences,
- Revitalizing the domestic international conference of The Liberal Herald.

5. Internationalisation of studies

BISLA purposefully deepens the internationalisation of teaching as well as of students. It creates conditions for increasing the number of international students, communicates with foreign institutions as well as existing partners. For example, it makes use of the ECOLAS network (The European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences), of which it is a part, and tries to link up with other institutions focusing on liberal studies. It is increasing the involvement of students and staff in international academic mobility programmes. BISLA encourages the creation of multi-faculty and interdisciplinary joint degree programmes, particularly in view of the need for real-world practice and the needs of society as a whole.

BISLA creates and deepens strategic partnerships with prestigious foreign universities in the field of education. It actively participates in European and non-European programmes, invites lecturers from abroad, supports and rewards the participation of students and teachers in international competitions. BISLA considers international mobility as an important part of the qualification process, strongly supports mobility, especially within the Erasmus+ programme, but also in other mobility programmes and is

gradually introducing the electronic exchange of mobility-related administrative documents (Erasmus without paper - EPW) with partner schools within the programme. BISLA uses all available tools, including personal contacts of teachers abroad, to obtain mutually beneficial Erasmus+ cooperation for students and staff at leading universities worldwide. BISLA supports the development of virtual academic mobility (online courses) using international cooperation.

Strategic area indicators

- Strengthen the promotion of BISLA, e.g. by reaching out to new marketing firms or using modern promotional channels, etc,
- Recruit prospective male and female students in neighbouring countries, - Strengthen cooperation on exchanges and short-term stays (summer schools) with partner schools within GLAA and ECOLAS - hosting summer schools at BISLA, involving other schools in the Winter School programme organised for Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University,
- Greater promotion of BISLA exchange visits,
- Encourage regular discussion on the ideal number of students at BISLA.

6. Material and technical support

BISLA's long-term goal is to ensure the availability of modern classrooms and equipment that enable effective and interactive teaching. Our university will strive to create adequate spaces for discussion, group work, creative activities and other classroom activities. It is important that we have access to modern technology and equipment such as computers, printers, projectors, digital whiteboards and other aids that facilitate teaching and learning.

In addition, the university's physical facilities should include modern libraries that provide access to the latest literary works, research publications and databases. The University will ensure that these resources are available not only to students but also to researchers and other members of the academic community.

Nowadays, digitalisation and technological progress are becoming an increasingly important factor in material and technical security. The university should be equipped with modern hardware and software that enable fast and efficient information transfers. In addition, there should also be availability of online courses, videos, podcasts and other remote resources that allow students and researchers to access the latest information.

Nowadays, it is also important to consider the digital security of the university. The digital world is changing rapidly and the university should be able to provide modern technology and facilities that enable effective and secure teaching and research. Security and data protection are key to the digital security of the University.

BISLA is committed to work systematically to improve the material and technical provision to enhance the quality of education. In the coming years, BISLA plans to improve the computer facilities in its classrooms and to make more electronic resources available to its students. BISLA also plans to expand and improve its library and continuously focus on acquiring physical copies of up-to-date resources. Ensure sustainable and responsible management of financial resources that takes into account the needs and goals of the higher education institution.

Strategic area indicators

- Upgrade classroom and staff office space,
- Set up a studio for recording student podcasts in the BISLA basement, - Upgrade the BISLA library and provide access to multiple databases of scholarly publications,
- Create a social space for BISLA students to organise discussions, - Modernise BISLA common areas and buildings.

7. BISLA partners

BISLA plans to expand its collaborations in the coming years and continue to maintain its current partners. We are currently working with ECOLAS (European Consortium for Liberal Arts and Sciences) where we are committed to providing high quality liberal studies education. BISLA's goal in the coming years within ECOLAS is to become a leader and a centre for the dissemination of ideas of education in the form of Liberal Studies within Central Europe.

Strategic area indicators

- Organize meetings with international partners to increase potential cooperation and establish new contacts,
- Joining new international organizations and associations dealing with the quality of higher education ,
- Organize meetings of ECOLAS group members in order to raise awareness of liberal arts in Central Europe.

8. Ethic

BISLA places emphasis on preventing and addressing plagiarism and academic fraud. In order to improve and enhance the quality of education provided and to create a safe environment for all, BISLA has developed a code of ethics that aims to provide the maximum form of protection to students, staff and faculty. BISLA plans to continue expanding the current form of the Code of Ethics in order to prevent any form of discrimination or creating an inappropriate environment for the BISLA academic community. BISLA plans to expand the current form of the Code of Ethics and create regulations for more complex issues (sexual harassment, minority rights, etc.) that are more targeted to specific issues that may not be covered in the Code of Ethics and could lead to problematic situations.

Strategic area indicators

- Updating and supplementing the Code of Ethics to enhance the protection of the rights of BISLA students and staff,
- Establishing individual regulations governing specific issues such as sexual harassment, gender equality, rights of minority or disadvantaged groups, - Organizing workshops and training sessions to raise awareness among staff and students on various topics related to interpersonal relations and ethical issues in the workplace, etc,
- Regularly collect feedback on student and staff satisfaction with the environment at BISLA.

9. Identity

BISLA purposefully builds its university identity in line with modern communication standards, respecting the historical roots and tradition of higher education in liberal arts programmes. BISLA consciously and purposefully builds a welcoming atmosphere of cooperation, collegiality and professionalism and promotes professional, sporting and cultural activities to strengthen relationships.

It actively promotes study opportunities at BISLA to both Slovak and foreign applicants; it publishes all necessary information about the education provided and the school's activities. BISLA carries out promotional activities at secondary schools in Slovakia and abroad. Through its activities, BISLA consciously contributes to the sustainable development of the whole society, makes itself visible in solving societal and regional problems, uses its potential to communicate fundamental issues and public attitudes, provides relevant opinion-forming professionally informed information and statements to the public, carries out targeted outreach activities, disseminates scientifically based facts and prevents the dissemination of false or fabricated information, supports educational and scientific activities aimed at addressing current global environmental challenges and will target the reduction of the energy intensity of its premises. BISLA will strengthen and improve the presentation of its scientific and pedagogical results and activities in the media.

Strategic area indicators

- Increase transparency in the publication of data on BISLA's functioning,
- Increase the clarity of the BISLA website for clearer communication to students and the general public,
- Introduce an academic system for BISLA students,
- Simplify the administrative burden on BISLA staff and create a clearer system of communication between the different sections of the University (academic calendar, etc.).

This long-term development plan of BISLA was discussed by the Academic Senate of BISLA Bratislava on 16.02.2024 and approved by the BISLA Board of directors on 6.5.2024.

doc. Samuel Abrahám, PhD.
Rector of BISLA

prof. PhDr. František Novosád, CSc.
Chairman of the BISLA Board of directors

Mgr. Lukáš Siegel, PhD.
President of the Academic Senate of BISLA