



LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES EVALUATIONS MARCH 2016

This report refers to the external assessment of three language study programmes at the Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas) and Vilnius Business College in Lithuania by an international assessment team in March 7 – 11, 2016.

Evaluation Team:

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Programmes Evaluated:

- 653Q31003, Professional Bachelor Programme Applied English Language, Vilnius Business College (further on – VBC or VBC programme);
- 612Q10004, Bachelor Programme English and other foreign language, Vilnius University (further on – VU or VU programme);
- 621Q30002, Master Programme Applied English Linguistics, Vytautas Magnus University (further on – VU or VU programme).

The evaluations were organized by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

The institutions undertook internal evaluations of the programmes and submitted Self Evaluation Reports (SERs) and related documentation. The evaluation teams had the opportunity to study this documentation and subsequently conducted site visits to the institutions, and then discussed each study programme and arrived at final decisions.

The evaluations were conducted according to the following main areas:

- Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes
- Curriculum Design
- Teaching staff
- Facilities and Learning Resources
- Study Process and Student Assessment
- Programme Management.

The programmes evaluated represent one college bachelor programme, one university bachelor degree programme and one university master programme. Two programmes – VU and VMU, were positively assessed, the VBC programme was assessed negatively.

Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

The area was rated good in VMU and VU programmes, but satisfactory in VBC programme. It means that in the case of VU and VMU the field has a systematic development and has acquired distinctive features.

However, in the case of VBC it needs improvement despite of meeting the established minimum requirements: although the programme's aims and LOs are generally consistent with the 1st cycle of studies, the programme's aim formulation needs to be expressed in a more compact way and the qualifications level offered is not evenly related to all positions because it only partly matches the formulated LOs.

VU programme has experienced radical improvement in the formulation of the study programme's aim. In VMU's case the programme's aims and learning outcomes are clearly formulated, it is convincingly proved that the goals of the study process match the need to train multi-profile experts capable of applying the acquired research skills in translation, English and Lithuanian philology, ELT and cultural studies.

Curriculum Design

This area was rated good for VMU and VU programmes, but unsatisfactory for VBC programme.

In the case of VBC the positive aspect of the curriculum design area is that a wide spectrum of courses of applied English in business contexts are offered. However, the applied academic component is weak: for example, the text production level of the Internship Reports shows clear weaknesses in teaching and in the resulting student performance. The gravest mistake of the programme management structures is a voluntary decision to ignore this the requirement of writing bachelor theses in the end of studies and substitution of the final thesis by final examination with very liberal criteria of demands. Since 2010 this is a first case of such negligence resulting from wishful thinking.

In VU programme the curriculum design offers a wide choice of practical applications and from an academic programme that is job-related enough. Still, in some details, the curriculum design seems difficult to apply the ideal interactive teaching components. As to VMU programme, the particular strengths are reflected in the curriculum that has been adapted to the latest requirements in teaching and academic research.

Teaching staff

The particular evaluation area was rated good/exceptionally good for VMU and VU programmes, but satisfactory for VBC programme. This area seems to be one of the strong aspects of all the three programmes taken together.

Although VBC seems to create appropriate conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff, the most critical issue is caused by the fact that the majority of teachers involved in the VBC programme have additional work commitments outside the College, there is lack of applied research strategy at the institutional level and research orientation at the programme level.

In VU and VMU the teaching staff composition presents a strong advantage for the programme, due also to the presence of native speakers in the case of VU; in VMU the level of ability of teaching and research by the academic staff is on a high level - the areas of research are relevant to curriculum content and contribute to the development of the programme.

Facilities and Learning Resources

This area was rated very good for VMU programme, good for VU programme and satisfactory for VBC programme. There is an impression that the development of this area has also left an impact on the overall evaluation score of all the three programmes (and therefore it should not be underestimated both by the respective HEIs and the external assessment teams), as VMU has 20 points, VU – 19 points and VBC – 11 points. Therefore the programme development structures (programme committees, departments, faculties etc.) should take this into consideration and regard facilities and learning resources as one of directions of long-term and fundamental strategic development.

Although the area was rated as satisfactory for the VBC programme, a serious problem is the lack of adequate individual workspace for teachers, and this drawback does not encourage the academic staff to prepare for the next lectures or classes or do research work in the staff-room, it makes lecturers chose vacant lecture rooms for consulting students.

In the case of VU one of the programme's strengths is that the IFL is currently involved in a EU-funded project aimed for upgrading the infrastructure and basic equipment. The positive aspects of VMU facilities are the following ones: sufficient number of seats in the lecture rooms, workplaces in the library, satisfactory quantity of data bases and computers for maintaining an effective study process, the study process is adapted for the needs of disabled students, students and academic staff members actively use the *Moodle* platform.

Study Process and Student Assessment

This area definitely seems to be the strongest aspect of all the three programmes and looks hopeful in the respect of sustainable development for all assessed programmes (even the VBC programme that was not accredited this time). Each of the evaluated programmes has both strong and relatively weaker points in this area therefore it is difficult to generalize here. One conclusion of the assessment team is that in all programmes the admission requirements are clear and publicly accessible, and the assessment system of students' performance is clear and relevant to reality. The drawbacks are rather individual for each programme: for VBC the overall level of students' applied research is weak and needs further improvement, in the case of VU website information relevant for the applicants is not easily accessible, for VMU there is a problem of differences in English language proficiency level in the beginning of studies, mainly with students who are not graduates of VMU's Bachelor programmes.

Programme Management

Another aspect that is clearly related to the success of each programme, as VMU and VU has been rated as good in this area, but VBC has received an unsatisfactory evaluation.

A special case is the programme management in VBC: the management "system" and principles of its functioning lack clarity, because it is impossible to detect who is going to attract adequate funding, who answers for the increase in the number of more students; who is going to provide additional financial resources for development etc. However, the gravest fault of the programme management lies in the fact that it has misinterpreted or subjectively interpreted legal acts requiring that "the study programme must be completed by the assessment of the student's achievements at the examination on the final thesis (projects)", and this is a serious violation of legal acts.

In the case of VU the Study Programme Committee has reviewed and elaborated the competences and formulation of LOS, the Committee regularly performs feedback analysis of the programme and its delivery to and from students, graduates, academics and social partners, (although this feedback has not been systematically communicated). As for the VMU Programme management, it is clear that the management displays commitment, serious effort, attention to detail, and expertise of the staff. A very positive fact is that the SER Team has followed the recommendations of the previous external experts team's recommendations.

Prof. Dr. Jānis Sīlis (team leader)

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