SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *TEISĖ* (*601M90004*) VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

_____

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *LAW* (*601M90004*)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vytautas Magnus University

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader:

Dr. Robert Lane

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Prof. Tanel Kerikmäe

Prof. Mar Campins Eritja

Dr. Raimundas Kalesnykas

Ramūnas Kazlauskas

Birutė Noreikaitė

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

Vilnius
2014

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	*Teisė*
Valstybinis kodas	601M90004
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Teisė
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Vientisosios
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	328 ECTS kreditai
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Teisės magistras ir teisininko profesinė kvalifikacija
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2004-10-13

––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	*Law*
State code	601M90004
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Law
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Integrated
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	328 ECTS credits
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of law and lawyer professional qualification
Date of registration of the study programme	13-10-2004

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Legal background of the Programme evaluation. This report is performed under Article 40 of the Law on Higher Education and Research (2009), according to the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania (2010) and the Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law, approved by the Order No. V-1385 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (2010).

VMU Faculty of Law. Vytautas Magnus University Faculty of Law (hereinafter – VMU Faculty of Law) is one of the ten faculties of Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter – VMU). VMU, established in 1922, re-established in 1989, and ranked as a TOP 700 University in the world (QS World University Rankings), is a classical university of Liberal Arts based on the common beliefs and values of freedom, openness and dialogue, and orientated towards humanist culture. The status, management and structure of VMU is regulated by the Statute of the University, approved by Law in 2010. Currently, VMU contains 13 academic divisions, 6-university centre, 11 offices, 8 public enterprises and 6 other divisions founded by University (including the Library, Publishing House, Lithuanian Consulting Centre, etc.).

VMU Faculty of Law is the first Faculty of Law in independent Lithuania, inasmuch as it started its activities in 1922 after the establishment of the University of Lithuania, which was later given the title of VMU. After the reestablishment of VMU in 1989, the first students were admitted to the law programme in 1995. VMU Faculty of Law is managed by the Faculty Council and the Dean. The Council is the top self-governance body of the VMU Faculty of Law. Currently there are 2 departments (Department of Public Law and Department of Private Law) in the Faculty which conduct research and organize studies of certain areas. The Faculty has around 800 students and close to 50 fully-employed administrative, academic and teaching staff.

Programme evaluation. The Integrated study programme of Law (hereinafter – ISPL) is offered by VMU Faculty of Law. ISPL are managed by Study Programme Committees headed by chairpersons. ISPL is categorized as an "*integrated study programme, which includes First and Second Cycle*" programme within the Lithuanian system of higher education. It can be completed in five years. It leads to a Master of Law degree and lawyer professional qualification; and provides 328 ECTS credits under the European Credit Transfer Scheme.

Self-evaluation group of the Programme was formed on 21 March 2013 by the Order No. 145 of the VMU Vice-rector for studies. SER Tables 2 and 3 provide workloads and responsibilities as well as work schedules of members of the self-evaluation group.

During the visit to VMU Faculty of Law on 24 February 2014 experts were told by the self-evaluation team, which prepared the SER, that ISPL had been developed as part of a VMU Faculty of Law strategy to focus on the provision of higher education which in order to meet the fast emerging needs of the Lithuanian legal services communities, would have a strongly international character. ISPL was registered in 13 October 2004 and accredited until 31 December 2014, following a thorough expert evaluation.

The procedure of Programme evaluation. The Self Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) of the ISLP was made available to the expert team in January 2014. Experts' group has focused on the six areas specified in the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes (2010): Programme aims and learning outcomes; Curriculum design; Staff; Facilities and learning resources; Study process and students assessment; Programme management; and then more precisely upon the criteria prescribed for each area. Experts have awarded to each area what they have concluded to be the appropriate grade under the scheme prescribed by the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes (2010).

All the members of the expert team examined the SER individually, preparing preliminary reports and indicating problem questions or discussion points. The experts obtained further information during the site visit to VMU Faculty of Law in Kaunas on 24 February 2014 through interviews with Programme co-coordinators, heads of administrative staff, senior and junior members of the academic and teaching staff, students, graduates and employers. After the visit, on 28 February 2014 the expert group held a meeting, discussed the contents of the evaluation report and agreed upon the numerical evaluation of every paragraph of the evaluation. The draft report was composed through electronic exchange of opinions within the expert team and forwarded to VMU Faculty of Law. After receipt of the comments from the VMU Faculty of Law, the expert team members prepared final version of their reports, which were integrated into one document by the chairman of the team.

Evaluation team. Evaluation team consists of six members. The chairman of the team: Dr. Robert Lane (Scotland), team members: Prof. Tanel Kerikmäe, (Estonia), Prof. Mar Campins Eritja (Spain), Dr. Raimundas Kalesnykas (Lithuania), employers representative: Ramūnas Kazlaukas (Lithuania), students representative Birutė Noreikaitė (Lithuania).

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The SER (Par.2) provides an admirably comprehensive and clear account of directions in the aims at the Strategic Plan of the VMU Faculty of Law. It is abundantly evident from the detailed descriptors provided in the SER's Annex 2.

The main aim of the Programme is oriented to the universal educational model, where preparation the lawyers is focused on obtaining the theoretical and practical knowledge and professional skills in the field of national, regional and international laws. The graduates are expected to become highly qualified legal professionals being able to adapt the acquired knowledge and skills into the changing legal environment of national and international market. The aims set a high level of ambition in relation to the coverage of substance, which is to include all-important areas of human social life, which may be seen as a contributing factor for the choice of an integrated 5-year programme as an alternative to separate Bachelor and Master level programmes.

ISPL are offered by VMU, Vilnius University (VU) and Kazimieras Simonavicius University (KSU). The differences between programmes are that the VMU is regional university, which ensures the need for regional diversification of academic-professional preparation of lawyers. ISPL used the unique system of *Liberal Arts* education at VMU, which provide students with interdisciplinary subjects and has international education traditions, high standards of quality and versatility, oriented to peculiarities of work in the international environment, civil law and common law legal systems and traditions, transnational organizations and international companies. In addition, ISPL at VMU is of a wider profile (without specializations) and offers the integrated model of common law and bilingual studies and differs from that of VU and KSU in its content, study credits, aims and learning outcomes.

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes are substantiate, clear, well defined and focused on academic and professional requirements, public needs, including life-long learning mode. The intended learning outcomes of the Programme are defined according to the Description of the General Requirements for Degree Awarding First Cycle and Integrated Study Programs *(Order No. V-501 of 9 April 2010 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania),* the Descriptor of Study Cycles *(Order No. V-2212 of 21 November 2011*

of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania), Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law *(Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)* and correspondent with the requirements of the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework (SER, Par.2).

Objectives and expected learning outcomes of the ISPL are available to the public online and in the meetings face-to-face with teaching staff, alumni and social partners, all information are accessible in a variety of hard copy and electronic media. These include its website, and, as experts' group was able to confirm for themselves during the site-visit, as part of the wide range of course material, which is made available via VMU *Moodle*-based learning management system (hereinafter – LMS). Experts' conclusion is that, in these ways VMU is communicating this information very effectively, and this was reinforced by the testimony experts' team received in the meetings with teachers, students, and social partners during the site-visit. This demonstrated that ISPL aims and learning outcomes are well understood by all of its key stakeholders.

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes are focused for developing the student's legal theoretical and practical skills, social and communication skills and professional competences. This is clearly seen in the Table 4 of SER, which shows the synthesis of learning outcomes, competences acquired and study subjects, in which learning outcomes are achieved.

In the opinion of the experts, that the Programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of legal studies and the level of qualification offered, is useful to distinguish generic and subject-specific competences for better understanding the ratio of the Programme aims and learning outcomes with the aims and learning outcomes in course curriculum. Clarity between acquired competences and the expected results would allow harmonizing the realization of Programme aims with learning outcomes. In addition, experts miss clear evidence that the Programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the needs of labour market. It seems analyzing the content and expected learning outcomes of the field study modules, also during the meetings with SER group and social partners. In spite of this observation, learning outcomes are used in the design of the Programme and are clearly specified and harmonized with study programme aims; they are achieved by teaching specific subject modules included in the course curriculum.

Finally, we have concluded that ISPL is appropriately titled, that it meets all of the formal requirements which apply to a Programme of this kind, and which are helpfully summarized in the SER; and that it is, therefore, consistent with both the type and level of studies; and the qualification to which it leads. Experts have based this conclusion on: the overview of ISPL's learning outcomes (SER Table 4); the Order on study procedures of the Dean of the VMU Faculty of Law, 2011 (SER Annex 3); the structure of the Programme (SERSER Annex 1) and the detailed module descriptors (SER Annex 2).

2. Curriculum design

The Programme is set up as integrated studies, without distinction between Bachelor and Masters level of studies, although students may leave the programme to take separate Masters level degrees, which are not covered by the qualification reach of the Programme.

The ISPL involves 328 credits (5 years). The curriculum design of the Programme meets the legal requirements for the integrated study programs partly. The specific legal document - *Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)* - requires, that the scope of integrated law studies at universities should be 300 ETCS credits. Though general legal document -

General Requirements for Degree-Awarding First Cycle Integrated Study Programmes (Order No V-501 of 9 April 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania) - sets the flexible amount of integrated studies at universities (300 – 360 ECTS credits), but VMU should follow on the specific legal requirements and not exceed 300 ECTS.

The studies at VMU are divided in parts that correspond in size to respectively Bachelor and Masters level programmes, which are referred to as first and second cycle parts of the Programme. With a total of 328 ECTS credits, 208 ECTS credits or 1 – 7 semesters are dedicated to the first cycle, while 120 ECTS credits or 8 – 10 semesters are dedicated to the second cycle of studies.

Actual teaching on the second cycle is effectively limited to 1 year of courses, including 2nd summer semester, which is further restricted by the fact that this year also includes internships and research tasks. In the opinion of the experts, the clear number of subjects (it varies from 5 to 6 per semester) and amount of credits (except for the last semester) allows students to simulate their studies and at the same time to achieve the intended learning outcomes. However, in spite of this, it is appropriate to consider about reduction the amount of ECTS credits of general subjects and increase the amount of ECTS credits for professional practice. Contemporary lawyer's education must correspond to the needs of the labour market and practice-oriented learning outcomes.

The study courses of the Programme are organized evenly over the study semesters. The ISPL consists of 12 study semesters: 5 fall semesters, 5 spring semesters and 2 summer semesters. The maximum amount of credits over a semester (except for the last semester) is 36, the average – 24 credits. Most of the subjects cover 4 or 6 credits (except optional courses "Criminal Law Clinic" and "Civil Law Clinic"). However, it should be noted that while the first and second cycle of studies allows for the students to elect a branch of study from A, B and D group subjects, optional courses in the field study of foundation and from special group of subject. It seems for existing a risk for a double limitation in the courses applies in the modulation of personal individualization of studies. On the one hand, students may design individual study plans by choosing interdisciplinary, optional, general and study field subjects; on the other hand, in the process of the study individualization of the studies may deviate from the core objective and learning outcomes of ISPL. From this point of view, in purpose to improve the study process experts see a potential for modifying "small" and "narrow" study subjects (4 or 6 ECTS) to "large-scale" study modules within 15 or 30 ECTS credits (for example, study subjects "Agency Law", "Contract Law", "Enterprise Law" could be transferred to the one subjects names as "Commercial Law" or study subjects as "Criminal Law Clinic" or "Civil Law Clinic" to "Law Clinic, *see Annex 1).*

Each study module has a clearly different theme and the themes are thus not repetitive. Themes of the obligatory modules are relevant and they are covering important areas. Link of each study module with the learning outcomes has been considered and clearly reflected in the module description. Experts see a weakness when the final learning results and acquired professional competences are not defined in course module "Final Thesis". The order of the course subjects within the study plan could be improved according with the *Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)*, students needs and the reactions of stakeholders. For example, the optional field study courses are provided from 6th or 1st summer semester, but in fact, the students has no chance to deepen their study field knowledge early. Seeing that 1st study cycle required to educate student for more specific cognitive abilities, experts see the opportunity to adjust the study plan, where more study field subjects will be integrated as mandatory subjects instead general subjects.

Despite this comment, it is the opinion of the experts that the content of the courses and other modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies. The study methods include both

classical teaching methods, with lectures in classes, and active learning elements, with role playing and case based problem solving, both in the individual and group format, with class sessions for such actively learning being based on smaller sessions of up to 25 students per class.

In accordance with paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 of the Order No. ISAK-1026 of 15 May 2009 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on the Approval of Full-Time and Part-Time Studies, the volume of contact work in hours is established by a higher education institution; however, it should account for at least 20 percent of the total volume of the first cycle study program and at least 10 percent of the total volume of the second cycle study program. Paragraph 21 of the *Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)* set up the provision that not less than 20 percent and not more than 60 percent in the field of study must consist of classroom work. The volume of contact and independent work of students in each subject is established in accordance with these documents and decisions of the Study Programme Committee of the Faculty, approved by the Faculty Council.

In the opinion of the experts, the ratio of contact hours and independent work in the Programme is significantly higher than the minimum requirements provided in the legislation. As can be seen from the descriptions of study subjects (Annex 2), where contact hours and classroom works range from 30 percent to 50 percent. This can be explained as a qualitative indicator in order to properly organize independent work, teacher's preparation for individual work tasks, checking them, providing feedback, which helps students to evaluate their own achievements and the progress that has been made.

The chosen *Socratic* teaching methods in the Programme are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and that the scope of the Programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. However, some concern is expressed by the experts, based on the limitations using the newest science and research data available in the branches of field study at the 1st study cycle and it seems in the descriptors of study field subjects (Constitutional Law, Legal Theory, Administrative Law and Procedure), as to whether the second cycle fully reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies.

3. Staff

From the information supplied in the SER (Par. 4), and Annexes 4, 6 and 7, experts are confident that the staff employed to teach on ISPL meet the two basic requirements set out in the *Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)*, (2010): i.e. that no less than 50 percent should have professors, associated professors titled or doctoral degree; and over 50 percent should have practical experience in the field of law studies. Experts' group pays attention for positive attitude of visiting teachers in the implementation of study process of the Programme.

It appears that a large number of teaching staff are not full-time employees of the VMU Faculty of Law, but are at the same time pursuing professional careers as judges, prosecutors, lawyers and administrators, which allow the VMU Faculty of Law to retain teaching staff that would otherwise be induced to leave for better salaried work outside the university environment.
The current system does raise concerns as to the availability of teaching staff for the students, with the risk of lectures cancellations due to professional engagements, but on the other hand does ensure that practical experience may be integrated into the content of Programme.

The most teaching staff are either conducting scientific research or have had practical experience in the areas in which they are teaching; and are thereby adequately qualified to enable students to achieve the prescribed learning outcomes. However, this was not so in all cases. It would be

invidious to cite specific examples here; and, in any event, we accept that, particularly for some specialized modules, it will not always be possible to obtain staff with precisely relevant research or practical experience.

Discussions with students, alumni and social partners did not present the experts with a clear impression of whether the balance between limited availability and the integration of professional experience rests in the favour of the teaching. On this background, it is necesSERy that the VMU Faculty of Law administration should make efforts to monitor this issue. Apart from this concern, it is the opinion of the experts that the number and the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes.

Academic staff is hired through competitive procedures and on the basis of fixed-term contracts, and they are evaluated on a 5-year basis. According to the SER, the returning 5-year evaluations ensure that academic staff has an own interest in professional development, which is offered amongst other through the means of participation in exchange programmes, national and international research projects and scientific activities, as well as access to international conferences. Furthermore, teaching training is offered at the national and international level, and the scholarly output of the academic staff is monitored.

Finally, based on what experts learned from the SER (Par. 4.3 – 4.5), the detailed teachers' curricula vitae (Annex 8), and the meetings experts held with teachers, experts are generally satisfied that the provision which VMU makes for teaching-staff training and development, and which includes an annual programme of seminars and workshops devoted to learning and teaching methods, is sound and effective.

Experts were particularly impressed with the extent to which participation in various seminars, conferences, train the trainers programmes is considered obligatory, and is monitored via the annual process of performance review each year. However, for the future, and as noted above, experts' group would urge VMU to consider using its provision for teaching-staff development, in order to encourage teachers to conduct research and/or to obtain additional practical experience, which is related to the teaching modules for which they are responsible.
To judge from all of the evidence experts considered, including the SER, Annexes 4, 6 and 7, and the testimony given in the meeting with senior administrators, this is, in any event, very low indeed. In this regard, experts were further assured by the fact that the teachers, whom experts met, insisted that they were extremely happy with and committed to ISPL, and had no intention to leave VMU.

However, either experts would encourage VMU Faculty of Law administration to make every effort, to ensure to secure staff that are researching or practicing in the areas in which they will be teaching; or, alternatively perhaps, to equip them with the necesSERy expertise via suitably targeted training and development.

On this background, in the opinion of the experts that the VMU creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necesSERy for the provision of the Programme, and that the teaching staff of the Programme is involved in research directly related to the study Programme being reviewed.

4. Facilities and learning resources

The SER (Par.5) records that the facilities and learning resources which are available to ISPL students are located in different premises of VMU (for Group C subjects) and since 2009 in the newly equipped administrative facilities of the VMU Faculty of Law, which having been modern and classrooms substantially improved the working conditions of the students, teachers and administrative staff. Classrooms, reading room, offices of departments and teachers, conference

room are highly comfortable and up-to-date: all workstations are suitable for work with a computer; the premises are provided with Wi-Fi Internet; the VMU Faculty of Law has acquired a video projector to meet the needs of students, teachers and administrative staff.

As a result of the review of material resources during the site-visit, experts were able to confirm that what the SER says is correct. The facilities, which VMU Faculty of Law provides for the implementation of ISPL, are of a high quality; are certainly more than sufficient to ensure the effective delivery of the Programme; and, in addition to those mentioned above, include a welcoming cafeteria, and a number of informal social areas distributed throughout the VMU facilities.

All of the classrooms, which experts saw, including the one experts' group used as their base-room, had computers and data projectors to provide instant access to the internet and to Moodle-based learning management system (LMS). All academic and teaching staff receive basic study information in an electronic format: through e-mail group communication, the internal VMU network First Class, and the distance learning system Moodle. VMU has a fully equipped distance-learning environment: all of the courses' study content is accessible on mobile Internet, tablet PCs, etc.

The experts were also given a tour of the joint library facilities at VMU, which provides a positive environment with workspaces for the ISPL students, including 3 lending departments, 11 reading rooms and audio library. Furthermore, there are 471 workspace units, and around 100 computers for public use; students can use Wi-Fi in this area. VMU library possesses 279,269 copies of 134,843 document titles. The library has 141,740 documents in open access collections over the previous year, 20,702 new copies of 10,598 titles were acquired. 49 full-text online licensed databases and 30 full-text trial databases are available for students and teaching staff. However, the law section of the library was marked by a rather limited selection of books, especially compared to the available shelving space, although this is partly compensated by the available range of online databases.

The Mykolas Romeris Law Reading Room operating at the VMU Faculty of Law is dedicated only for ISPL students and teaching staff. The collection of law readings at Mykolas Romeris Law Reading Room consisted of 4,686 hard copy documents and books (2,394 titles). This reading room has 19 workstations, 9 of which are equipped with computers with Internet access. The computers are used for information searches in licensed and trial databases as well as for the reading of CDs. There are 25 databases intended for the students and teachers of the VMU Faculty of Law. Experts are satisfied that course plans (methodical, practical, theoretical materials) are presented to students through an electronic conference system of the VMU Faculty of Law on the Moodle system. Each course subject taught has its own electronic conference thread, where the previously mentioned materials can be found. The teacher of the specific subject is responsible for the collection and preparation of such materials as well as their delivery to the students. Experts' group are also satisfied that the library holdings are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to meet ISPL's needs, and experts were assured by the teachers, whom they met, that VMU Faculty of Law always supplies any additional materials which are requested.

As already noted, experts paid particular regard to the "practice" opportunities, which are open to ISPL students, and which mainly take the three months internship linked to his/her thesis, which each student has to complete in the final year. The SER mentions a number of external organizations, which are prepared to offer such internships, and from what experts' group was told in the meeting with social partners, experts have no reason to doubt that this is the case. But experts miss the opportunities to obtain practice at specialized institution as they called in-house Law Clinic, which will let the students to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills

and involve the teaching staff for seeking the new ideas in the developing student's professional competences.

On this basis, the opinion of the experts that the VMU Faculty of Law has adequate arrangements for student practice, and despite the comment concerning the library stock, that teaching materials, including textbooks, books, periodical publications, and databases, are adequate and accessible.

5. Study process and student assessment

Admission to the Programme is based on selected grades obtained in secondary education, which includes the grades obtained in history, mathematics, foreign languages, Lithuanian language and literature. During the visit, the experts questioned the reasons for selecting the given admission criteria, but obtained no clear statement of reasons. However, history may be taken as a common indicator for social sciences, and mathematics as an indicator for reasoning, while both national and foreign language abilities may be deemed relevant for text analysis. On this background, the experts are able to find that the admission requirements are well - founded.

The average drop - out rate over the last 5 years has been ranged between 9 to 21 percent, mostly because of students not able to meet the academic requirements or switching between study programmes, switching between universities and personal reasons. This could point towards a cause for reconsidering the admission criteria applied, as well as the organization of the studies. However, despite this concern about admission and dropout, it is the opinion of the experts that the Programme ensures an adequate achievement of the learning outcomes. As set out above, it also appears to the experts that the students are encouraged to participate in research, art and applied research activities, as well as student mobility programmes, including use of the Erasmus network. Moreover, every year, from 1 to 2 students travel to study for one semester to the Texas Tech University (USA) and the Michigan State University (USA) under the applicable bilateral exchange agreement.

We were generally impressed with an extensive use of the intranet system "First Class" (FC) and distance learning system *Moodle* for information dissemination, as well as access to re-exams and appeal procedures, together with cooperation between the VMU Faculty of Law and the student association.

The students experts' group met confirmed that they value the intranet system "First Class" (FC) and distance learning system *Moodle* and that they experience no difficulties accessing, either "on-site" or remotely, to the main resources of studies – related information to each member of the community (students, teachers, etc). It allows for searching for the latest available information related both to the Programme course materials and schedules, as well as exams, grading and evaluation. These include: EBSCOhost, Westlaw, HeinOnline, Taylo&Francis, Litlex, Infolex and etc. All students of the Programme have the possibility to consult teachers on the subject issues both directly or via this Intranet system.
For the future, though, experts would encourage VMU Faculty of Law to consider exploiting even further the potential offered by an LMS such as *Moodle* – for example to develop more multi-media and/or interactive learning methods. Experts believe that this would be of great benefit to all students, but most especially to those who are studying part-time in the ISLP.

From the meetings with the administrators, teachers and students experts' group was very satisfied, overall, with the academic and social support, which VMU Faculty of Law makes available. Student support at VMU Faculty of Law includes not only ensuring easily accessible and timely information on the study programme, but on recognizing and evaluating their informally acquired competencies via different workshops, internships and volunteer activities or

providing students with all other necesSERy support at the university, including scholarships and financial support. It was very clear evident that staff are highly committed to students and that students experience at VMU Faculty of Law as a supportive and friendly place to study.

Experts were satisfied that the ISLP study process, which is coordinated and supervised by administration of VMU Faculty of Law, enables the Programme to be delivered effectively and students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Students' performance assessment was renewed according with the VMU Regulation on Studies (2012) and Resolution of the Council of the VMU Faculty of Law (2012), in which study subjects in the field of law are subject to a stricter rule of composition of the cumulative grade. It provides that only positive evaluation of an examination passed or retaken may constitute 50% of the final grade. In the ISLP, exceptional attention is addressed to tackling plagiarism/cheating for ensuring fair study process.

The assessment criteria are explained to the students in relation to the courses concerned at the beginning of each semester, with examinations forming the major assessment criterion, using a 10-point grade system, which correlates with the ECTS system. Experts were fully confident that ISLP assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate, publicly available and reachable for everyone student. In the expert's opinion, the different situation may cause some doubt through the combination of summer semesters and facilities for distance learning where this process catered for the needs of students.

During the meeting with the administrators and stakeholders, experts were indicated that the graduates of ISLP has successful integration into the labour market, where 88 percent of graduates indicating that they had found work within 6 months after graduation. On this background, the opinion of the experts is that the professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the Programme expectations. However, students did raise concern about differences in the manner in which the system is applied to individual courses, leading to differences in grading results, which however is a common university issue.

6. Programme management

From the SER (Par. 7) experts found out two levels on evaluation of Programme management: general level of the VMU and the level of the VMU Faculty of Law. At the level of the University, the main body responsible for the management of the quality of the programmes carried out by the Centre for Quality and Innovation at VMU (hereinafter - CQI) established in 2011. The primary management of the ISPL is implemented at the level of the VMU Faculty of Law. Quality assurance and internationalization of legal studies were listed as core development goals mentioned in the 2012-2020 strategy of the VMU Faculty of Law.

From the meetings experts' group held with senior administrators, the SER team, teachers and stakeholders experts were satisfied that the prime responsibility for the management of ISLP lies with the Study Programme Committee (hereinafter – SPC), which is the main administrative body responsible for quality assurance process and directly involved in the decision-making processes related to the ISLP.
The SPC supervises the implementation of the Programme, arranges its assessment and renewal, and assesses study subjects included in the programme. The SPC meets regularly each semester and discusses general issues regarding the improvement of teaching quality in terms of the key quality indicators of the Programme content, relevance to the labour market, learning environment, appropriate dialogue between students and teachers. SPC consists not only from teaching staff, but from members of social partners and student.
According to the SER (Par 7.2.), CQI routinely collects a very wide range of data and other information for quality assurance and other programme-management purposes.

An internal assessment of the Programme is carried out regularly to make sure that feedback from the participants of the Programme would allow for addressing the shortcomings of the Programme, elimination of problems which would lead to the improvement of the Programme content, and teaching process planning and implementation. SPC implemented regular evaluation of learning outcomes and involvement of stakeholders. Since 2000 each year study and teaching quality assessment instruments consist of two standardized questionnaires for students (Study Subject Teaching Quality Assessment: Students' Opinion) and for teachers (Study Subject Teaching Quality Assessment: Teacher's Opinion). For the improvement of the quality of studies, the Faculty employs additional student surveys: a final-year student survey upon the submission of the final master's thesis, and an intranet teacher assessment system operating on the university scale, where all students can anonymously provide information about the subjects completed.

Experts were able to confirm from the meetings with senior administrators, teachers, students and social partners that all this data and management information is not only routinely and rigorously collected by the SPC, VMU Faculty of Law and CQI, but is then systematically analyzed and used for a number of processes all of which are of great relevance to both quality assurance and Programme development.

Experts' group is not aware about any formal *external e*valuation of the ISLP. However, experts were able to confirm, from a variety of evidence they received, during the meetings with senior administrators, the SER team, teachers, students and social partners, firstly that the annual process of Programme audit ensures the systematic, rigorous and regular internal evaluation of the ISLP takes place; secondly that it is considered very carefully and professionally by those responsible for managing and delivering the Programme; and thirdly that it leads to such action as is required to develop and improve the Programme.

ISLP has essentially three key "stakeholder" groups: 1) the students, who take the Programme; 2) the academic and teaching staff, who are responsible for designing and delivering the course curriculum; 3) social partners (alumni, the private and public sector organizations), for which ISLP is intended to produce competent and employable graduate-level recruits. The SER shows that these stakeholders are closely and routinely involved in ISLP's continuing improvement and development (Pa. 7.3, 7.4.). This was amply confirmed by the evidence, which experts obtained in their meetings with all these three groups.

Some examples, which experts learned from teachers how they were able to ensure that additional materials that they required for their study courses were obtained by the library, and how they were able to use the monthly departmental meetings to make proposals for improving quality in Programme and for changing teaching methods, learning outcomes and assessment of students knowledge. Experts similarly heard from students that they were very satisfied with the various channels which are open to them – most notably the VMU Students Unit, their representation on the SPC and the survey – to suggest ways in which the Programme could be improved and with the response they received from the VMU Faculty of Law.

Finally, experts' group was extremely impressed with the extent of social partner involvement in the development of ISLP. All the social partners whom experts met stated that they were fully aware of the role of the SPC and of how they could use it to propose changes to the Programme. Furthermore, social partners gave concrete examples of changes, which they had proposed and which had been implemented. These included the introduction of optional modules on Disability Law, Law of the Sea, Medical Law, Moot Court Competition, both of which were intended to make ISLP of greater potential value to their professional career in the future.

Experts have concluded that ISLP's quality assurance measures and Programme management are both effective and efficient. The experts found out that responsibilities for decision-making and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme are clearly allocated, information and data

on the implementation of the Programme are regularly collected and analyzed, and the outcomes of internal evaluations of the Programme are used for the improvement of the Programme with the involvement of stakeholders.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As for the Programme aims and learning outcomes, the Programme should:
1.1. clearly define and distinguish the generic and subject-specific competencies with regard to the eligibility requirement posed for the 1st study cycle (bachelor level) and 2nd study cycle (master level);
1.2. reconsider to have open access to specialization, especially during the second cycle of studies, possibly also during the first cycle, while remaining within the obligation to provide a wide ranging and extending the interdisciplinary approach of studies in law;
1.3. increase the presence of methodological courses that would provide the students with more practical and pre-research skills;
1.4. provide more specific description of the expected learning outcomes for the Final Degree Project within the subject module syllabus, which correspond with the main objective of the Programme.

2. As for the Curriculum Design, the Programme should:
2.1. comply with the legal requirement in its content and structure with regard to the eligibility rules posed for the 1st study cycle (bachelor level) and 2nd study cycle (master level);
2.2. reduce the total amount of credits in general subjects and the number of general subjects;
2.3. increase number and amount of credits for professional practice (internship) in the study field of law where practical learning outcomes could be reached early than in the last study semester;
2.4. streamline the study process through exploring the possibilities of merging the smaller study modules into larger ones in the field subjects;

3. As for the teaching staff, there are several elements that should be considered:
3.1. increase full time academic staff as far as possible;
3.2. reinforce and formalise the continuous professional training of teaching staff for the provision of the Programme;
3.3. allocate resources to promote international mobility among the teaching staff.

4. As for the facilities and learning resources, there is a need:
4.1. to think about the concentration of learning facilities and resources in the one place;
4.2. to improve library's resources and capacity with the enlargement of room for students and the availability of larger traditional bibliographic resources;
4.3. to adapt the facilities for disabled students.

5. As for the study process, it is counselling:
5.1. to elaborate on modernization of study references in the study module descriptions, including recent literature and electronic media resources;
5.2. to involve more students participate into international exchange programmes, eventually having focus on European dimension of the Programme;

6. As for the Programme management, it should be noticed:
6.1. to diversify the quality assurance system tools supporting innovation and development of the study programme according to the changing needs of legal labour market;
6.2. to clarify the role and competencies between the Dean's Office, Heads of the Department and Study Programme Committee on how they interact in managing the Programme.

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

IV. SUMMARY

The experts obtained a very positive overall impression of the Programme, with a comprehensive range of *Liberal Arts* education with *Common Law* orientation, which provides VMU students to familiarize themselves with a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects, multicultural contexts, foreign languages and creativity and critical thinking.

The Programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined and correspond to the requirements of international, national and internal VMU documents, but not fully reflected the needs in the employment market. The expected learning outcomes are coherent and consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered, and the learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered appear to be compatible with each other. In the future, the experts recommend focusing on the development of the possibilities in choosing subjects by extending the interdisciplinarity of studies and specialization options, also to amalgamate the field study subjects and move gradually to modular training system.

Field subjects and modules in the Programme are unique, exclusive and standardise, consistent with the level of studies, and appropriate for the achievement of learning outcomes. The link of each study subject with the learning outcomes has been considered and clearly reflected in the module description. The order of the modules (group A, B, C and D) within the study plan is appropriate and coherent.

Together with the distribution of subject matters on various courses, the chosen *Socratic* teaching methods appear appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and the scope of the Programme seems sufficient to ensure the general learning outcomes. The assessment system of student performance is transparent, adequate and publicly available, and the professional activities of the graduates meet the Programme expectations. VMU Faculty of Law should follow on the existing specific legislation for ISPL and change total amount of ECTS credits (328) to required 300 ECTS (at the *Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (Order No. V-1385 of 19 August 2010 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania)*

The qualifications and the number of the teaching staff in the Programme are adequate to ensure expected learning outcomes and meet the legal requirements. The academic staff of the ISPL has to be commended for very successful research and project activity, which is supporting modernization of the education, also at the same time to bring practical experience into the Programme. Experts see the lack of fully employed academic staff, and the fact that 2/3 of teaching staff are highly involved in legal practice outside the university, together with the absence of international mobility and clear leadership might jeopardize the staff's commitment to the institution as well as the existence of a strong academic community. In the future, experts recommend setting up the clear conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the Programme. Otherwise, most of the academic staff may lack enough teaching experience and training in teaching methodologies.

While the Faculty of VMU does not have its own premises for studies, the teaching equipment (classes, computer equipment, consumables, library) and learning resources (teaching textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases) are sufficiently adequate and accessible, and the arrangements for students practice appear suitable and satisfactory. However, the law section of the library was marked by a rather limited selection of books, especially compared to the available shelving space, although this is partly compensated by the available range of online databases.

Students showed in a great number and were impressively motivated. VMU student and administration institutions take care for the students' financial and social support, sport, culture activities and social life. They very favourably valued the *Liberal Arts* profile of Programme and practical experience of their teaching staff, the international mobility opportunities offered by the Programme and the availability of placements. The assessment of students' knowledge, abilities and skills includes colloquiums, seminars, group works, individual tasks and aims at stimulating good academic performance throughout the semester, not only during the sessions. They also highlighted the ease, friendly and democratic of contact and interaction with their professors and administration and expressed general satisfaction with them. Stakeholders too were very committed with the Programme and emphasized students' professional training and the development of innovative projects.

Cooperation between the Faculty of Law, teaching staff and the students appears to be very well functioning, with a great degree of pride and loyalty expressed by students, teachers, alumni and social partners during the meetings with the experts. Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme are clearly allocated, and information and data on the implementation of the Programme are regularly collected and analyzed. The outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the Programme are used for the improvement of the Programme, with procedures that also involve students, alumni and social partners.

The recommendations set out above concern issues that may be regarded as minor in the overall evaluation of the Programme. However, they do at the same time constitute concerns raised by the experts, based on international experience, and should be given due consideration, and which may also relevant in discussions with other authorities concerning the conditions provided for the Faculty of Law at VMU and the Programme.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Law (state code – 601M90004) at Vytautas Magnus University is given positive evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	4
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	4
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	4
	Total:	**21**

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader: Dr. Robert Lane

Grupės nariai:
Team members: Prof. Tanel Kerikmäe

Prof. Mar Campins Eritja

Dr. Raimundas Kalesnykas

Ramūnas Kazlaukas

Birutė Noreikaitė

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto studijų programa *Teisė* (valstybinis kodas – 601M90004) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	4
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	4
6.	Programos vadyba	4
	Iš viso:	**21**

* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

IV. SANTRAUKA

Bendras įspūdis, kurį ekspertai susidarė apie šią programą, yra labai geras. Liberalios studijos (*artes liberales)*, orientuotos į *Bendrąją teisę*, užtikrina VDU studentams galimybę susipažinti su įvairiais tarpdisciplininiais dalykais, daugiakultūrine aplinka, išmokti užsienio kalbų ir ugdo kūrybiškumą bei kritinį mąstymą.

Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai apibrėžti ir atitinka tarptautiniuose, nacionaliniuose bei VDU vidaus dokumentuose nustatytus reikalavimus, tik ne visiškai atspindi darbo rinkos poreikius. Numatomi studijų rezultatai atitinka studijų rūšį, pakopą ir kvalifikacijų lygį; numatomi studijų rezultatai, programos turinys ir suteikiama kvalifikacija dera tarpusavyje. Ekspertai rekomenduoja ateityje didinti galimybę pasirinkti dalykus, tam tikslui didinant studijų tarpdiscipliniškumą ir specializacijų skaičių; taip pat rekomenduoja sujungti studijų krypties dalykus ir pamažu pereiti prie modulinės mokymo sistemos.

Šios programos studijų krypties dalykai ir moduliai yra unikalūs, išskirtiniai ir standartizuoti; jie atitinka studijų lygį ir yra tinkami numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti. Kiekvieno studijų dalyko ryšys su studijų rezultatais yra apsvarstytas ir aiškiai atsispindi modulių apraše. Studijų plane nurodyta modulių seka (A, B, C ir D grupė) yra tinkama ir nuosekli.

Pasirinkti „sokratiniai" mokymo metodai ir studijuojamos medžiagos pasiskirstymas įvairiuose dalykuose, atrodo, yra tinkami numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti; panašu, kad ir programos apimtis yra pakankama bendriesiems studijų rezultatams užtikrinti. Studentų pasiekimų vertinimo sistema yra aiški, vieša ir tinkama studijų rezultatams įvertinti; absolventų profesinė veikla atitinka programos lūkesčius. VDU Teisės fakultetas turėtų laikytis esamų teisės

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

aktų, skirtų specialiai vientisosioms teisės studijų programoms, ir sumažinti bendrą ECTS kreditų skaičių nuo 328 iki 300 ECTS kreditų (*Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2010 m. rugpjūčio 19 d. įsakymas Nr. V-1385 dėl Teisės studijų krypties aprašo*).

Programos dėstytojų kvalifikacija ir skaičius yra pakankami numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti ir atitinka teisės aktų reikalavimus. Šios studijų programos dėstytojus reikėtų pagirti už labai sėkmingą mokslo tiriamąją ir projektinę veiklą, kuri padeda modernizuoti švietimą, o kartu praturtina šią programą praktine patirtimi. Ekspertai pastebi, kad mažai yra visu etatu dirbančių dėstytojų, o tai, kad du trečdaliai dėstytojų užsiima profesine veikla už universiteto ribų ir kad žemas tarptautinio judumo lygis bei nėra aiškaus vadovavimo, gali turėti neigiamo poveikio dėstytojų įsipareigojimui bei lojalumui šiam universitetui ir trukdyti susiformuoti stipriai akademinei bendruomenei. Ekspertai rekomenduoja ateityje nustatyti aiškias akademinio personalo profesinio tobulinimo sąlygas, siekiant užtikrinti programos įgyvendinimą. Priešingu atveju daugeliui dėstytojų gali pritrūkti dėstymo patirties, be to, jie gali nežinoti dėstymo metodikos.

Nors VDU (Teisės) fakultetas neturi savo patalpų studijoms, mokymosi įranga (auditorijos, kompiuterinė įranga, vartojimo reikmenys, biblioteka) ir metodiniai ištekliai (vadovėliai, knygos, periodiniai leidiniai, duomenų bazės) yra pakankamai tinkami ir prieinami, o susitarimai dėl studentų praktikos yra tinkami ir geri. Tačiau knygų pasirinkimas bibliotekos teisės skyriuje gana ribotas, ypač palyginus su turimais stelažais, nors iš dalies tai atstoja turimos internetinės duomenų bazės.

Studentų, gausiai susirinkusių į susitikimus su ekspertų grupe, motyvacija įspūdinga. VDU studentų ir administracijos organizacijos rūpinasi studentų finansine bei socialine pagalba, dalyvavimu sporto ir kultūrinėje veikloje, visuomenės gyvenime. Jie labai teigiamai vertina programos liberaliųjų menų studijų modelį ir jos dėstytojų praktinę patirtį, programos studentams siūlomas tarptautinio judumo galimybes ir praktikos galimybes. Studentų žinių, gebėjimų ir įgūdžių vertinimas apima kolokviumus, seminarus, grupinį darbą, individualias užduotis; tuo siekiama paskatinti gerus akademinės veiklos rezultatus ne tik per sesijas, bet ir per visą semestrą. Studentai pareiškė, kad jų santykiai su dėstytojais ir administracija yra laisvi, draugiški, demokratiški ir iš esmės juos tenkina. Socialiniai dalininkai taip pat labai atsidavę šiai programai; jie akcentavo studentų profesinį mokymą ir novatoriškų projektų rengimą.

Atrodo, kad Teisės fakultetas, dėstytojai ir studentai puikiai bendradarbiauja; per susitikimus su ekspertais studentai, dėstytojai, absolventai bei socialiniai partneriai pareiškė, kad tuo didžiuojasi ir yra lojalūs. Atsakomybė už sprendimus ir programos įgyvendinimo stebėseną aiškiai paskirstyta; nuolat renkama ir nagrinėjama informacija bei duomenys apie programos įgyvendinimą. Tobulinant programą, naudojamasi vidinio ir išorinio vertinimo išvadomis; tobulinimo procese dalyvauja studentai, absolventai ir socialiniai partneriai.

Pirmiau išdėstytos rekomendacijos susijusios su problemomis, kurias galima laikyti ne itin svarbiomis bendrame programos vertinimo kontekste, tačiau, atsižvelgiant į tarptautinę patirtį, jos vis dėlto kelia rūpestį ekspertams, taigi joms reikia skirti tinkamą dėmesį. Jos gali būti svarbios svarstant VDU Teisės fakultetui ir šiai programai numatytas sąlygas.

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Programos tikslų ir numatomų studijų rezultatų sritis:
1.1. aiškiai apibrėžti ir išskirti bendrąsias bei dalykines kompetencijas, atsižvelgiant į pirmosios studijų pakopos (bakalauro) ir antrosios studijų pakopos (magistrantūros) studijoms keliamą tinkamumo reikalavimą;

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

1.2. persvarstyti laisvo specializacijos pasirinkimo galimybę, ypač antroje studijų pakopoje, o galbūt ir pirmoje pakopoje, kartu išsaugant įsipareigojimą laikytis *plataus* tarpdisciplininio teisės studijų metodo;

1.3. padidinti metodologinių dalykų, kurie studentams suteiktų daugiau praktinių ir pasirengimo mokslo tiriamajam darbui įgūdžių, skaičių

1.4. pateikti konkretesnį baigiamojo darbo projekto numatomų studijų rezultatų aprašymą, kuris atitiktų pagrindinį programos tikslą.

2. Programos sandaros sritis:

2.1. programos turinys ir sandara turi atitikti teisės aktų reikalavimus, turint omenyje pirmosios pakopos (bakalauro) ir antrosios pakopos (magistrantūros) studijoms taikomus reikalavimus;

2.2. sumažinti bendrą bendriesiems dalykams skiriamų kreditų skaičių ir bendrųjų dalykų skaičių;

2.3. padidinti teisės studijų krypties profesinei praktikai (praktikai) skiriamų kreditų skaičių, kai praktinių studijų rezultatus galima pasiekti anksčiau nei paskutinįjį studijų semestrą;

2.4. supaprastinti studijų eigą ištyrus galimybes mažesnės apimties studijų modulius sujungti su didesnės apimties moduliais.

3. Personalo sritis:

3.1. kiek įmanoma padidinti visu etatu dirbančių dėstytojų skaičių;

3.2. sustiprinti ir formalizuoti nuolatinį dėstytojų profesinį mokymą, siekiant užtikrinti programos dėstymą;

3.3. skirti išteklių tarptautiniam dėstytojų judumui remti.

4. Materialiųjų išteklių sritis:

4.1. apsvarstyti materialiųjų išteklių sutelkimo vienoje vietoje galimybę;

4.2. didinti bibliotekos išteklius ir talpą išplečiant studentams skirtą erdvę ir didinant tradicinių bibliografinių išteklių prieinamumą;

4.3. pritaikyti patalpas neįgaliems studentams.

5. Studijų eigos ir jos vertinimo sritis

5.1. atnaujinti studijuojamos literatūros sąrašus, įtraukiant naujausią literatūrą ir elektroninius išteklius;

5.2. įtraukti daugiau studentų į dalyvavimą tarptautinių mainų programose, galiausiai sustiprinant europinį programos aspektą.

6. Programos vadybos sritis:

6.1. įvairinti kokybės užtikrinimo sistemos priemones, kurios padeda stiprinti naujovių diegimą ir studijų programos tobulinimą atsižvelgiant į kintančius teisės darbo rinkos poreikius;

6.2. paaiškinti dekanato, katedrų vadovų ir studijų programos komiteto funkcijas, kompetencijas ir bendravimą vadovaujant programai.

<…>

_____

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras