



**MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
LITHUANIA**

**ORDER  
ON APPROVAL OF THE DESCRIPTOR OF THE STUDY FIELD OF RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES**

03 November 2020 No. V-1673  
Vilnius

In accordance with Paragraph 11 of Article 53 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania:

1. I approve the Descriptor of the Study Field of Religious Studies (enclosed).
2. I determine that the higher education institutions have to adjust their study programmes to the Descriptor of the Study Field of Religious Studies approved by Clause 1 hereby until 01 October 2021.

Minister of Education, Science and Sport

Algirdas Monkevičius

APPROVED  
by Order No. V-1673 of the  
Minister of Education, Science and  
Sport of the Republic of Lithuania  
of 03 November 2020

## **DESCRIPTOR OF THE STUDY FIELD OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

### **CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. The Descriptor of the Study Field of Religious Studies (hereinafter – Descriptor) regulates the special requirements for the study programmes in the study field of religious studies (N13) in the group of study fields of humanities (N). The Descriptor regulates the study field of religious studies in the scope not covered by the General Requirements for the Studies approved by Order No. V-1168 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 30 December 2016 “On approval of the General Requirements for the Studies.”

2. In addition to national and international legal acts, the institutions developing their study programmes in the field of religious studies may also refer to the legal acts and other documents that are in compliance with the institution’s profile and the purpose of the study programme (e.g., confessional studies).

3. The Descriptor’s requirements shall be applicable to the study programmes of the first and second cycle and integrated studies that are conducted in a full-time and part-time study mode. The integrated studies may be carried out when the necessity and particularity of such studies, in accordance with the agreements between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania, are regulated by the legal acts and other documents of the Holy See.

4. Religious studies may also be provided as studies within the study programmes classified under two study fields and within interdisciplinary study programmes.

5. There are no special requirements established in the Descriptor for the persons, who want to be admitted to the study programmes in the field of religious studies. The requirements of studies compensating for differences and/or bridging courses are provided in the descriptors of particular study programmes of second cycle.

6. The purpose of the study field of religious studies is to provide a possibility for students to acquire knowledge about religion, to direct them to learn to collect and assess critically versatile religion-related information, and to be able to analyse, discuss and interpret various sociocultural phenomena constructively on the basis of the acquired knowledge, if these discussions are related to religious issues. Depending on the study fields, upon which religious studies are organized (e.g., philosophy, psychology, history, etc.), the possibility should be provided to acquire knowledge within the scope necessary to achieve the purpose of a particular study programme.

7. The graduates of the study field of religious studies:

7.1. upon completion of the university studies of first cycle, they will be able to find, select, process, analyse and interpret the information necessary for professional activities; to express ideas on religious topics orally and in writing, to participate in public discussions on religious issues with specialists within a discipline and other areas and with society at large; to improve own professional competence, to endeavour at personal and professional growth, to comply with professional ethics, to study through entire life, and they will be ready to continue studies at the next cycle;

7.2. upon completion of the integrated studies and the studies of second cycle, they will be able to apply the acquired knowledge in various professional activities in the religious and/or secular areas; to research, assess critically and to discuss various sociocultural events and problems, the treatment whereof includes questions from different areas; to improve own professional

competence, to endeavour at personal and professional growth, to comply with professional ethics, to study through entire life, and they will be ready to continue studies at the next cycle.

8. The persons, who complete the studies in the study field of religious studies, receive bachelor's/ master's degree in humanities that is in conformity with the sixth/seventh level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, and first/second cycles of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area attested by the diploma of bachelor's/ master's degree in humanities and diploma supplement issued by the higher education institution.

## **CHAPTER II CONCEPT AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY FIELD**

9. The religious studies are meant to analyse the phenomenon of religion in a complex and modern way, in consideration to its multi-layered structure, historical development, heterogeneous historical religious traditions, and certain automatism of the phenomenon of religion that remains even in front of criticism of modern thinking. The religious studies are conducted in consideration to the factors that form modern world and culture – tension between the secular trends of the modern culture and efforts to realize and consolidate continuity of cultures formed on the basis of various traditional religions. These studies also include the latest theoretical research and methods relevant for different disciplines analysing religion.

10. The object of analysis and reflection of the humanities in the religious studies is the forms of knowledge that demand for interdisciplinary research. The religion as an object of religious studies needs an interdisciplinary approach (the religious studies cannot be identified with any single discipline researching religion – religious research, anthropology, sociology, etc.); however, at the same time they need definition with regard to confession, i.e., they may be confessional and non-confessional.

11. In the interdisciplinary mode, the study programmes have to cover problematic perspectives encountered in the junction between theology, religious philosophy, history of religions, and religious research.

12. The study programmes may be of confessional and non-confessional character:

12.1. the main difference between the non-confessional and confessional studies lies in absence of internal dependency from theology of the confessional character, when an integrated theoretical approach without confessional bounds is selected (e.g., philosophical), and when theological courses are taught not from the internal perspective of a certain confession, but from the external perspective, by consolidating interdisciplinary character at the same time (the theological courses, mainly history of development of individual theologies, are taught in integration with religious research, philosophy, psychology, art and cultural history, and other disciplines);

12.2. when religious studies are conducted in the confessional environment, i.e., in higher education institutions, faculties, or programmes belonging to a certain religion or confession, greater or exclusive focus is made on research of that particular religion in various contexts. The study programmes of the study field of religious studies conducted in the confessional environment may have closer relation with the study programs in the field of theology; however, they differ from the theological study programmes because they give bigger attention to practical aspects or are oriented to preparation and improvement of particular specialists within the context of certain confession (e.g., employees in various areas of religious education, developers and executors of religious programmes, catechists, etc.). Official instructions of a certain religion or confession how to conduct religious studies may be taken into account (if applicable), when religious studies are conducted in the confessional environment.

13. The study programmes must have the purpose to prepare specialists of religious studies of high qualification on the interdisciplinary and confessional or non-confessional ground, who would satisfy the European and world standards, who would understand clearly the peculiarity

of the religious situation in a modern secularized world, and who would be able to adapt the acquired knowledge for independent professional and/or scientific activities.

14. The study programmes have to reflect upon the modern social and cultural context that affects religion, and they have to define and provide interdisciplinary and confessional or non-confessional approach.

15. The interdisciplinary approach has to be formed in the study programmes, identifying the discipline, on which the interdisciplinary character is based (philosophy, theology, etc.), and the difference of that approach from other programmes of the same approach (e.g., the difference of theological approach from the study programme in the field of theology is indicated in the study programmes in the study field of a confessional religion).

16. The graduates of the religious studies may work in various areas and institutions, where need for knowledge in the science of religion is established (e.g., educational and cultural institutions of various profiles, media, etc.).

### **CHAPTER III GENERAL AND SPECIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES**

17. When the university studies of the first cycle are completed, the following learning outcomes have to be achieved:

17.1. knowledge, its application:

17.1.1. the graduates are able to form, define and use correctly the religious concepts in their professional activities;

17.1.2. the graduates know the history of religions, they can list and describe the most important religions, are able to discuss their origins and major factors of their historical and theological development;

17.1.3. the graduates are able to define the phenomenon of new religious movements, to list directions of religious spiritualities, their development and principles;

17.1.4. the graduates know modern sociocultural context and are able to discuss it using modern knowledge of other disciplines;

17.1.5. the graduates are able to apply the acquired knowledge in religion for interdisciplinary studies and various areas of professional activities;

17.2. research skills:

17.2.1. the graduates are able to read and interpret the sources of studied religion, to systemize information, and to assess it critically;

17.2.2. the graduates are able to collect, analyse and interpret scientific and informative literature of the religious studies, to process it, and to apply modern methods for collection, analysis and systemization of information;

17.2.3. the graduates are able to research, assess and interpret scientific, cultural and social events and problems with regard to religion;

17.3. special abilities:

17.3.1. the graduates are analysing and discussing logically and critically the issues of religious sciences and relevant problems; they form their ideas comprehensively and accurately;

17.3.2. the graduates are able to form independently and to solve creatively the relevant theoretical and practical religious issues by applying the complex technological, organizational and methodical means; they are able to convey the accumulated and processed information;

17.3.3. the graduates are able to perceive critically and to convey the historical, social and cultural meaning of religious traditions;

17.3.4. the graduates are able to understand the importance of dialogue between the religious and different confessions, and to develop this dialogue on the theoretical and practical level;

17.3.5. the graduates are able to understand the meaning of other scientific achievements for religious cognition; they use them and expand the religious discourse;

17.3.6. the graduates are able to plan, organize, conduct and assess independently the activities within the professional and academic context;

17.4. social abilities:

17.4.1. the graduates are able to convey smoothly the professional knowledge in writing and orally; they take particularity of different contexts, human rights and religious values into consideration;

17.4.2. the graduates are able to communicate and cooperate with the specialists from their area and society, to discuss relevant professional issues in the professional and interdisciplinary environment;

17.4.3. the graduates are able to generate and apply ideas of their own professional area and they participate in solution of relevant sociocultural problems;

17.4.4. the graduates are able to assume responsibility for professional activity while working in teams or individually, they observe professional ethics, and foster intercultural and interreligious relations;

17.4.5. the graduates are able to adjust to the changing work environment, to plan their activities with regard to the circumstances, to record the results, to correct the activities, and to carry out various projects;

17.5. personal abilities:

17.5.1. the graduates are able to learn independently in the areas of professional activities and studies and to plan the learning process;

17.5.2. the graduates understand and are able to assume responsibility for outcomes of professional activities and to assess their impact on society, its sociocultural development and human wellbeing;

17.5.3. the graduates endeavour at personal and professional development, are able to use national and international information sources, the latest technologies and academic databases effectively;

17.5.4. the graduates act in conformity with values corresponding to their professional area.

18. When the studies of second cycle are completed, the following learning outcomes have to be achieved:

18.1. knowledge, its application:

18.1.1. the graduates have acquired the latest knowledge in religious sciences and professional activity based on the results of fundamental and/or applied research;

18.1.2. the graduates are able to apply the acquired knowledge for scientific research and/or professional activities and use it to solve the set tasks and to implement the innovative ideas in a new environment;

18.1.3. the graduates know the latest research methods of the phenomenon of religion and/or religions and are able to apply them in scientific and/or professional activities;

18.2. research skills:

18.2.1. the graduates are able to analyse, synthesize, and assess the research data needed for studies, scientific and/or professional activities, and introduction of innovation in various areas of activity;

18.2.2. the graduates are able to integrate the latest interdisciplinary knowledge into researches of the phenomenon of religion and/or religions;

18.2.3. the graduates are able to integrate the latest interdisciplinary knowledge into research of various social environments and/or manifestations, to control difficult situations, to make decisions, and to suggest their alternatives;

18.2.4. the graduates are able to find and systemize information, to provide thorough and critical written or verbal analysis and judgment;

18.2.5. the graduates are able to perform scientific research independently, to select suitable research methods, to analyse and interpret the results received, to determine their reliability, environmental impact, and to form the conclusions;

18.3. special abilities:

18.3.1. the graduates are able to apply their knowledge in the professional activities, they know their organizational principles, and they perform the activities by analysing and considering relevant sociocultural processes and promoting dialogue between religious and secular worlds;

18.3.2. the graduates are able to prepare new information and methodological means needed for scientific research, studies and introduction of innovation in certain performance contexts;

18.3.3. the graduates are able to react adequately and critically to modern society's problems and/or issues with regard to the area and particularity of their studies, and they are able to integrate the necessary abilities from other disciplines, and to act in a socially responsible way;

18.4. social abilities:

18.4.1. the graduates are able to convey the summarized information in clear and reasoned way to the specialists of own area and general society; they demonstrate critical and creative way of thinking, and ability to discuss;

18.4.2. the graduates are able to assume responsibility for quality of own work and that of subordinate employees, they endeavour at smooth team work in own activities and in relations with society, and they act in compliance with professional ethics and citizenship;

18.5. personal abilities:

18.5.1. the graduates are able to plan independently the learning and working process, to bring the context of their performance up to date, and to organize provision of services accordingly;

18.5.2. the graduates are able to use the scientific research to integrate the knowledge in religion and other disciplines; they endeavour at more comprehensive understanding of social environment and act by making innovative decisions and assessing consequences of their activities for society;

18.5.3. the graduates have experience in research work, are able to systemize their knowledge and research results, think strategically, and perform scientific research and/or professional work independently;

18.5.4. the graduates are able to base their professional activities on recognition of each person's dignity, they tolerate differences between persons, their behavioural variety and religious beliefs, observe the principle of impartiality in scientific research and/or professional work.

19. When the integrated studies are completed, the learning outcomes in compliance with general and special outcomes of the study programmes of first and second cycles have to be achieved.

## **CHAPTER IV TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

20. Teaching and learning:

20.1. the teaching has to be based on the contents of fundamental and/or modern achievements of the science of religion, depending on the approach of the study programme, while modern knowledge in other sciences and study fields has to be integrated into the study process;

20.2. the studies have to provide a possibility to achieve the planned learning outcomes and to acquire the necessary skills to perform the professional functions. Besides, they have to form the professional motivation and the professional identity;

20.3. the constructive alignment between teaching methods, learning and assessment principles has to contribute to creation of the environment promoting cooperation, creativeness and mutual help, to motivate the students and to help them to plan their time and to use the material resources rationally;

20.4. the didactic concept of teaching and learning has to cover the flexible application of various study methods and search for integrated didactic solutions so that the students would acquire theoretical knowledge and develop special, social, personal abilities and research skills;

20.5. the following studying methods may be applied in the study process:

20.5.1. gnoseological method is intended to develop cognitive abilities and to provide cognitive knowledge (e.g., conveyance of cognition and knowledge through academic exercises), methods of knowledge perception (e.g., story-telling, conversation, illustration, demonstration, observation, learning through cooperation, situation modelling);

20.5.2. active methods intended to develop special, social and personal abilities (e.g., discussion, research, individual or group works or projects, imitation, etc.);

20.5.3. methods stimulating independent studies (e.g., reflexion, case analysis, solution of problems, imitation, subject-specific games, learning from experience, individual identification of problems, control and self-control methods);

20.5.4. the methods of inquisitive nature have to serve as a basis for independent studies (e.g., search for information, reflexion, information analysis and synthesis, application of particular research method, data interpretation, etc.);

20.5.5. the control and self-control methods have to guarantee feedback on professional aptitude to university teachers and students;

20.5.6. the same teaching methods may be applied in the study programmes of different cycles; however, the degree of complexity of presented knowledge and tasks and the expression of the student's independence have to differ. It is suggested to focus more on active learning methods in the study programmes of second cycle;

20.5.7. the practical training in various forms has to be planned for the integrated studies and the studies of first cycle and it may be included in the study programmes of second cycle. The practical training is organized according to the procedure established by a certain higher education institution that defines the practical training's goals, tasks, expected results and evaluation system of achievements, support to the student in the course of practical training, and the criteria, according to which the skills of certain level acquired by the student during the practical training are determined and assessed. The tutor has to be a specialist of religious sciences. Depending on the particular study programme, the practical training may be an important part of the studies that directs the student properly to optimal achievement of the learning outcomes. The practical training has to help to reveal the students' abilities and to help them to foresee the career perspective;

20.5.8. the reflexive abilities have to be developed in the study programmes as they provide a possibility to strengthen connection between theory and practice (e.g., theoretical courses have to be supplemented with practical training), to disseminate good practice (e.g., the students present publicly their projects in conferences and locations of practical training, they make suggestions about organization of practical training, and express their professional expectations and achievements; the graduates share their professional experience, make suggestions for improvement of the teaching and learning process; and stakeholders take part in discussions about improvement of the content of professional activities).

21. The system of assessment of learning outcomes has to be such as to make it possible to monitor and control progress of studies and intended learning outcomes, to identify changes in the study process, to keep a feedback, and to create preconditions for changes in the study programmes in a timely manner. The assessment system has to be based on the following principles:

21.1. the assessment has to be based on various methods that allow observing achievements of the students and assessing theoretical knowledge and practical abilities of the student. The following assessment methods are possible: written and oral examination, oral individual or group survey, test, colloquium, final work and its defence, report on practical training and its defence, etc.;

21.2. the systemic knowledge and abilities to systemize and interpret the accumulated information, and to carry out the research have to be assessed. The assessment of students' creative abilities (analysis, synthesis, comparison, creative story-telling, etc.) is important;

21.3. it is suggested to apply accumulative assessment. When the assessment criteria are formed, the threshold criteria have to be indicated, as they define the lowest compulsory result.

22. The feedback between all the participants in the studying process has to be guaranteed, as it provides a possibility to analyse and assess the efficiency of cooperation in the teaching and learning process (in lecture halls and locations of practical training). The students have to receive timely feedback on the performed work. The evaluation of learning outcomes has to be supplemented with constructive comments based on clear assessment criteria.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES**

23. The higher education institution that organizes the studies should have sufficient academic, administrative and support staff. The requirements for qualification and composition of university teachers and other staff conducting the studies are the following:

23.1. the basis of successful implementation of the study programmes is qualified university teachers, who are able to convey their knowledge to the students and to train the abilities necessary for professional activities, as well as suitable content of the study programme;

23.2. the competence of the university teachers is assessed according to their research, pedagogical and practical experience: participation in the scientific activities, level of scientific research, application of effective teaching methods, communication of science, recognition in professional and scientific societies, knowledge about areas important for the study field in religious studies, etc.;

23.3. the persons, who have at least master's degree or equivalent higher education qualification in the study or research field of the taught subject may teach in the study programmes of all the cycles. The study programmes of all the cycles end in the final work (project). The assessment commission of final works is formed in accordance with the requirements set by higher education institutions for a particular study cycle. This commission is formed from competent specialists – university teachers, scientists, professional practitioners and representatives of stakeholders, according to the procedure established in the higher education institution. At least one member of the assessment commission of final works has to be from another higher education institution. The assessment procedure of final works (projects) has to be documented clearly.

24. Requirements for special material resources of the studies:

24.1. the higher education institution that is organizing the studies must have sufficient infrastructure and methodical base to assure smooth process of studies. The lecture halls, other premises intended for teaching and independent work have to satisfy the requirements of hygiene and work safety. They have to be arranged according to the needs of the particular study programme and all the equipment needed for studies must be present (modern video and audio equipment, computers, demonstration measures, etc.);

24.2. sufficient number of computerized work places with appropriate software that is in conformity with standard communication, text and graphical software has to be arranged in the libraries and/or reading rooms. The computers must have access to Internet. The work places must provide access to the information sources necessary for the study programme: digital catalogue, scientific and specialized literature sources, national and international electronic databases, etc.