



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

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

30 November 2022 No. V-1902  
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 Area Studies (enclosed).
2. I determine that the higher education institutions have to adjust their study programmes to the Descriptor of the Study Field of Area Studies approved by Clause 1 hereby until 1 September 2023.
3. I recognise Order No V-825 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of July 23 2015 “On Approval of the Descriptor of the Study Field of Area Studies” as invalid.

Minister of Education, Science and Sport

Jurgita Šiugždinienė

APPROVED BY  
Order No. V-1902 of the Minister of Education, Science  
and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 30 November 2022

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

### **CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. The Descriptor of the study field of Area Studies (hereinafter referred to as the “Descriptor”) regulates the special requirements for the study programmes in the study field of area studies (N06) that belongs to the group of study fields of Humanities (N). The Descriptor regulates the study field of area studies in the scope not covered by the General Requirements for the Provision of Studies approved by Order No V-1168 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 30 December 2016 “On Approval of Description of General Requirements for the Provision of Studies”.

2. The requirements of the Descriptor shall apply to first and second cycle university study programmes conducted as full-time or part-time studies.

3. The main goal of the study field of area studies is to learn about the area/region under study from a disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary perspective:

3.1. the aim of the first cycle studies is to enable the knowledge and understanding of the diversity of the area/regions by applying different theoretical, methodological and practical approaches, to prepare working specialists with a broad humanitarian education, who know the specificity of the cultures and societies of the countries of the area under study, and who are aware of the processes of the cultural development of these countries;

3.2. the aim of the second cycle studies is to train area studies specialists who demonstrate high intercultural competences and are able to function effectively in a global multicultural society, solve the problems arising in it by employing interdisciplinary research, and foster the values of diversity of thought and action.

4. Graduates are awarded a Bachelor’s/Master’s qualification degree in the humanities corresponding to the sixth/seventh levels of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and to the first/second level of the European Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area, as attested by the Bachelor’s/Master’s diploma and the diploma supplement issued by the higher education institution.

5. The study field of area studies may be included in a range of interdisciplinary study programmes. The diverse knowledge and skills provided by area studies are useful for studying other humanities and social sciences, therefore a range of interdisciplinary study programmes are possible, integrating area studies with other studies in the fields of humanities and social sciences.

6. There are no specific requirements established in the Descriptor for admission to first cycle study programmes.

7. It is recommended that second cycle study programmes should be open through the admission contest, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the higher education institution, to applicants with Bachelor’s degree in humanities or social sciences. Holders of a Bachelor’s degree in another field of study must have completed bridging courses, the content and scope of which are determined by the higher education institution.

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

8. Area studies are a field of study that describes the study of culture and society in a selected geographical area/region, combining approaches from the humanities and social sciences. Study programmes in the study field of area studies involve in-depth study of a single area/country or group of areas/countries (hereinafter referred to as the “area”). The area-specific language(s) at the level of choice shall be an integral part of the first and, where appropriate, the second cycle study programmes in the field of area studies. Part of the study programme shall be allocated to language(s) studies, during which the linguistic competences are developed, depending on the intended purpose of the study programme, the competences to be developed and the results to be achieved.

9. Depending on the tradition of study and research in Lithuania, study programmes in the study field of area studies may include studies of the following areas/regions (countries): Africa (North African studies, Sub-Saharan African studies), the Middle East, Asia (Central Asian studies, South Asian studies, South-East Asian studies, East Asia studies), Europe, India (Indology), Japan (Japanese Studies), China (Sinology), Korea (Korean studies), Latin America, Oceania, Scandinavia (Scandinavian studies), North America, Turkey (Turkology). This list of areas/regions is not finite.

10. Study programmes are exclusively multidisciplinary (combining two or more academic disciplines) and/or interdisciplinary.

11. Requirements for the curriculum of study programmes shall be:

11.1. the area/country under study must be identified and clearly defined, e.g. Asian Studies, Japanese Studies, Scandinavian Studies;

11.2. the subject of a study programme in the field of area studies shall be defined as a subject devoted to the study of the fundamentals of a specific area and/or discipline;

11.3. in order to ensure multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinarity of the study programme, it must cover the group of academic study fields of humanities and social sciences. The quantitative relationship between them may vary depending on the concept of the study programme;

11.4. the curriculum of the study programme must reflect the intermediate position of area studies between subjects that go beyond the borders of the area and area-specific subjects. The study programme may be based on a conceptual mix of regional and specialised study subjects (the relationship between them may vary). In addition to area-specific study subjects, first cycle study programmes must include subjects that focus on the understanding of general theories in the humanities and social sciences, and the understanding of the broader inter-regional context, as well as on the practical development of linguistic and intercultural competences;

11.5. the totality of subjects in a study programme may be expressed in one of the following two ways:

11.5.1. as a methodological and conceptual combination based on the understanding and application of different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches;

11.5.2. as a general combination of several subjects/modules for a specific society or several geographically or historically related societies;

11.6. graduates can act as intermediaries between the area under study and societies outside it, therefore the study programme needs a comparative dimension:

11.6.1. different sub-regional traditions in the area under study are juxtaposed;

11.6.2. the area under study is compared with other geographical region(s) or in a global context;

11.7. each study programme must present area studies from both synchronic (interpretation of the relationship between phenomena at a specific point in time), and diachronic (interpretation of phenomena in terms of continuity and change over time) perspective. The relationship between these perspectives may vary depending on the concept of the study programme.

12. Study programmes are characterised by the coherence of the study subjects or modules studied, which is guaranteed by the geographical definition of the area under study. The depth and

breadth of the aspects of such studies depend on the concept of the study programme.

13. The studies may use a variety of cognitive strategies and research methods from the humanities and social sciences, as well as interdisciplinary cognitive strategies and research methods, but all study programmes must ensure the ability to analyse the cultural, social, political and natural environmental contexts of the area under study on the basis of written and/or visual and/or oral sources.

14. Completion of the studies offers the opportunity to pursue a career in a wide range of fields requiring knowledge of the specific area, an understanding of its specificities and analytical skills, theoretical and practical research on the area (data collection, analysis, criticism, assessment), and professional organisation (preparation and implementation of projects, programmes, initiatives). The acquired higher education qualification provides the opportunity to work in a wide range of national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, private structures and the business sector. Graduates can use the area-specific linguistic competences in the fields of translation and non-formal education and/or carry out a wide range of specific analytical and expert work related to the assessment of the area. Graduates have the opportunity to continue with their third cycle studies in Lithuania and abroad.

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

15. This section sets out the expected key learning outcomes, however they do not constitute a specification of the detailed curriculum of the study programme or subjects.

16. The following learning outcomes must be achieved by the individuals upon completion of first cycle studies:

16.1. knowledge and its application. The person must:

16.1.1. get to know the area under study by applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods of learning;

16.1.2. define the key concepts of the component study subjects or interdisciplinary fields of study when it comes to area studies and apply the methods of learning relevant to the study field of area studies;

16.1.3. be familiar with a variety of approaches to the area under study from different academic perspectives;

16.1.4. compare the similarities and differences between the area under study and other areas/regions of the world in terms of interculturalism and internationalism;

16.2. research skills. The person must:

16.2.1. use and analyse the area-specific primary and secondary written and/or visual and/or oral sources in the original language of the area;

16.2.2. prepare and write a research paper using library and Internet sources, analyse texts in the area-specific language, in Lithuanian (does not apply to foreign students) and in at least one Western European language, and use oral and/or visual material as a tool for learning about another culture;

16.3. social abilities. The person must:

16.3.1. communicate to specialist and non-specialist audiences the issues of the area under study and present relevant information and ideas;

16.3.2. be able to work in a group while at the same time showing initiative and combining common interests;

16.3.3. be able to formulate problems and propose solutions;

16.4. personal abilities. The person must:

16.4.1. work independently, demonstrating the ability to plan and manage the process of personal study-related and professional development, and reflect on one's achievements and

perception;

16.4.2. express ideas clearly, coherently and persuasively, and must support their analysis with evidence and arguments;

16.4.3. summarise information, evaluate critical comments and formulate sound judgements;

16.4.4. be aware of their moral responsibility for the impact of their activities and their results on social, economic, cultural development, well-being and the environment;

16.5. special abilities. The person must:

16.5.1. be able to explain the cultural, historical, social and political processes of the area from a chronological and geopolitical perspective, and be familiar with the current cultural, social, political and economic situation of the area;

16.5.2. speak, write, read and understand the language of the area under study at the level required by the study programme and apply knowledge of the language in research;

16.5.3. combine knowledge of at least two disciplines in the humanities and/or social sciences and apply it critically in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research;

16.5.4. identify the most important regional development problems and propose solutions to these problems;

16.5.5. demonstrate awareness, empathy and understanding of the area under study.

17. Upon completion of the second cycle studies, students must have achieved the following learning outcomes:

17.1. knowledge and its application. The person must:

17.1.1. summarise the global practices and historical trends of the area under study;

17.1.2. understand the complex nature of the study field of area studies and its relationship with other disciplines and interdisciplinary fields;

17.1.3. apply complementary research strategies, and methodological and theoretical approaches to the analysis of the culture of the area/region(s) under study;

17.2. research skills. The person must:

17.2.1. be able to critically compare and combine different disciplinary approaches in the study of the area;

17.2.2. develop and write a problem-oriented research paper on area studies, applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies and theories;

17.2.3. analyse data from the area under study by identifying, summarising and critically evaluating primary and secondary material;

17.3. social abilities. The person must:

17.3.1. complete oral and written tasks in a context-sensitive manner and within set deadlines;

17.3.2. be able to work in an interdisciplinary group;

17.3.3. present generalised information, ideas and solutions to problems to professionals and others, taking into account audience expectations and differences in subject matter expertise;

17.3.4. take responsibility for the quality, assessment and improvement of their own performance and that of the group, in accordance with professional ethics and civic mindedness;

17.4. personal abilities. The person must:

17.4.1. work independently, demonstrating the ability to plan and manage the process of personal study-related and professional development, and reflect on one's achievements and perception;

17.4.2. identify problems, make decisions and act without failing to recognise the potential consequences for social, political, economic, cultural development, well-being and the environment.

17.5. special abilities. The person must:

17.5.1. select and apply appropriate research methodologies and theories for the

area/regions under study;

17.5.2. read and use material, demonstrating the ability to compare ideas and concepts from different disciplinary and academic backgrounds in a reasoned and appropriate manner;

17.5.3. independently generate ideas and initiatives relevant to the area, using a variety of methods for acquiring, collecting, disseminating and preserving information and knowledge;

17.5.4. be able to gather and critically evaluate information about an issue of regional importance, a significant event, a cultural fact or phenomenon, and look creatively at the area-specific historical phenomena in order to find connections with the present;

17.5.5. be able to represent the diversity of the region ethically, creatively and effectively, reconcile different points of view and contribute to the dissemination of objective information about the area.

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

18. The strategy for the organisation, learning and assessment of studies must reflect the relevant needs of today's society and promote active student participation in the study process. It must be clearly defined in the study programmes in the study field of area studies.

19. The study process must be flexible and combine different study methods taking into account the desired learning outcomes. The applied study methods must be varied and effective, encouraging students to engage in the learning process, to cooperate with each other, to reflect on their knowledge and skills, and to evaluate their achievements and progress.

20. All the study methods (e.g. lectures, seminars, workshops, practical training, consultations, independent work, group work, practical placement, etc.) and techniques (e.g. presentation, explanation, illustration and annotation of theoretical material; presentation, analysis, discussion, summarisation of practical examples; case studies; "brainstorming"; discussions; debates; independent analysis of the study material; independent completion and presentation of individual or group assignments; role-playing games; expert method; mapping of ideas, concepts; project-based learning; problem-based learning; reflective diaries; study trips; fieldwork, interviews, *in situ* studies; virtual learning, etc.) applied in the study process must enable students to develop the expected general and specific competences and ensure an effective learning process based on the principles of diversity specific to the area under study.

21. The same methods of study and assessment may be used in different study programmes at different study cycles, but the content, complexity or expression of student independence must vary.

22. The assessment strategies of the study programme must be linked to the learning outcomes. Assessment methods should cover both knowledge and skill levels, as well as give students the opportunity to demonstrate specific and general skills, understanding and knowledge. Assessment methods should encourage students' independence and creativity.

23. Assessment methods may include: surveys, tests, concept maps, storytelling, presentation, diary, essay, case study, literature review, portfolio method, report, project development and presentation, assessment of practical skills, exam, and others.

24. The assessment of students' works should be linked to the ability to use academic databases and/or archives of primary and secondary sources.

25. The assessment of students' knowledge and skills must be reliable and based on clearly formulated and established criteria, taking into account the conditions under which the work is carried out and the resources available. Students may be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the methods and criteria for assessing the achievement of learning outcomes.

26. The system for assessing students' achievements that is linked to the study programme must be clearly documented and enable the higher education institution to ensure that students

completing the study programme have achieved the learning outcomes.

## **CHAPTER V REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY PROGRAMMES**

27. A higher education institution delivering and developing a new study programme in the field of area studies must take into account the following prerequisites for the study programme:

27.1. it must have the resources needed for the study programme: a collection of books, documents and periodicals discussing/presenting the area under study, access to electronic databases enabling the study of the specific area;

27.2. it must have direct links with foreign higher education institutions offering studies of the area concerned. It is recommended that these links be formalised in cooperation agreements providing opportunities for faculty and student exchange and research cooperation.

28. Recommendations for the delivery of study programmes are as follow:

28.1. the study programme should include the possibility of crediting partial studies in the area under study, which deepen area-specific knowledge. The period of partial studies (from one week to one academic year) must be counted as study credits. Partial studies may consist of formal study or a research project at a foreign higher education institution, or a practical placement at a foreign institution;

28.2. during their studies, students should be adequately motivated and informed about the nature and scope of their studies in the context of their future work. This should be done through internship, which should be based on close cooperation with the social partners;

28.3. students should be encouraged from the start of their studies to take part in informal activities as mentors, volunteers, members of clubs or other organisations, and project leaders, thus encouraging consistent and targeted improvement of personal, social and special skills and abilities;

28.4. students should be properly advised on study plans and career options, academic mobility, as well as properly motivated and informed about the nature and scope of their studies and future job opportunities;

28.5. studies are completed upon the assessment of the graduate's abilities through a public defence of the final thesis (project);

28.6. if a student is being awarded a Bachelor's qualification degree for completing a two-field study programme, the final theses/projects and/or final examinations of both groups of study fields (or one group, if the fields belong to the group) must be carried out and assessed, with a total of at least 15 study credits;

28.7. the final thesis (project) of the first and second study cycles is an independent research qualification paper, the object of which must include the area under study. The final thesis may be constructed on a disciplinary, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary basis:

28.7.1. the first cycle final thesis must be based on the knowledge and skills acquired during the studies, and must demonstrate competences in line with the learning outcomes of the study programme. The final thesis/project must demonstrate the student's level of knowledge and understanding, the ability to analyse the chosen topic, to evaluate the work previously carried out by other researchers, to describe their own practical and/or research work, and to formulate clear and justified conclusions in accordance with the requirements approved by the higher education institution. It is recommended that the work be based on an analysis of primary written and/or visual and/or oral sources in the original language;

28.7.2. the second cycle final thesis must be based on independent scientific or applied research, the application of knowledge, or prepared as a project demonstrating competences in line with the learning outcomes of the study programme. The final thesis/project must demonstrate the Master student's level of knowledge and understanding, the ability to analyse the chosen topic, to evaluate the

work previously carried out by others in the study field, to carry out independent research, to describe the research work carried out, and to formulate clear and justified conclusions in accordance with the requirements of the higher education institution;

28.7.3. the final thesis defence committee must be composed of competent professionals directly involved in the research, teaching or practical activities in the area: scholars, practitioners, representatives of potential employers. It is recommended that representatives of other institutions delivering study programmes in the field of area studies be invited to participate as members or chairpersons.

29. Requirements for teachers of study programmes in the field of area studies are as follow:

29.1. the competence of teachers is assessed on the basis of their scientific, pedagogical and practical experience, participation in research and other projects, project management, use of modern teaching methods, ability to communicate fluently in at least one of the languages of international cooperation (English, German, French), interest and enthusiasm in developing more effective teaching methods, scientific excellence, recognition in professional, scientific and other communities, participation in educational programmes, professional acumen and personal interest in students' research and independent work;

29.2. the competence of the teachers is assessed in terms of their qualifications in the relevant field of study and in terms of their regional competence, as indicated by their research on the area, linguistic competence, experience of research in the area, etc.

30. The material and methodological facilities necessary for the study process must be kept up to date and meet the following minimum requirements:

30.1. classrooms must comply with hygiene and occupational safety requirements. They must have state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and demonstration facilities;

30.2. the higher education institution must have sufficient computers and appropriate software: Internet connection, literature catalogues, search engines, appropriate language learning equipment;

30.3. libraries and reading rooms must be equipped with a sufficient amount of scientific literature, textbooks, methodological publications, reference books and other relevant literature in Lithuanian, as well as in the languages of Western European countries and the area under study. Libraries must be equipped with computers with online access to international databases. The reading rooms of the libraries must meet the requirements of hygiene and occupational safety and have good sound insulation.

31. Students must have access to all study materials and information on studies (timetables, course descriptions, final thesis requirements, etc.).

32. The internship in the field of area studies must be an integral and compulsory part of the first cycle study programme.

33. The internship may be a separate subject or an integral part of another subject.

34. The internship must be organised in accordance with the procedure for organising practical placement drawn up by the higher education institution, which defines the requirements for the internship, the specific tasks of the internship, the learning outcomes and the system for assessing the achievements, the support provided to the student during the course of the internship, as well as the criteria for assessing the level of skills acquired by the student during the internship.

35. The internship is organised in Lithuanian and foreign state institutions, non-governmental and international organisations, business enterprises. A higher education institution may provide the students with the possibility to undertake internship in the study field of area Studies the content of which shall be related to translation or pedagogical activities in educational institutions.

36. Supervisors of internship at a higher education institution must have at least a Master's degree or equivalent higher education qualification (not necessarily a degree in area studies) and at

least three years of teaching, research or practical experience in an area relevant to a specific study programme.

37. Students should be given the opportunity to contribute to research, experimental or dissemination activities of the unit of the higher education institution in which the study programme in the field of area studies is delivered.

38. Students must be offered career counselling.

39. The delivery of the study programme must be based on a quality assurance system in place and agreed with the social partners.

40. A higher education institution delivering study programmes in the field of area studies must ensure the quality of studies, continuously improve study programmes, and take into account the latest developments in the area studies, as well as the needs of the labour market and the students.

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