



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS "SOCIALINIS DARBAS"
(valstybinis kodas – 6211JX060)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF "SOCIAL WORK" (state code -6211JX060)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vytautas Magnus University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Socialinis darbas</i>
Valstybinis kodas	6211JX060
Studijų sritis (studijų krypčių grupė)*	Socialiniai mokslai (<i>Socialiniai mokslai</i>)*
Studijų kryptis	Socialinis darbas
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Antra
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2), iššęstinė (3)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Socialinio darbo magistras (socialinių mokslų magistras)*
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2010-02-22

* skliaustuose nurodomi nauji duomenys, kurie pasikeitė nuo 2017 m. sausio 1 d. įsigaliojus Studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose sąrašui bei Kvalifikacinių laipsnių sąrangai.

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Social work</i>
State code	6211JX060
Study area (Group of study field)*	Social sciences (<i>Social sciences</i>)*
Study field	Social work
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second (Master)
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time – 2 years; part- time (3 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of social work (Master of social sciences)*,
Date of registration of the study programme	22-02-2010

* in brackets new data provided, valid from 1 January, 2017 after List of study fields and groups of study fields Framework of qualification degrees came into force.

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of December 20,2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the following main stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *visit of the review team to the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

Based on external evaluation report of the study programme, SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative, such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas is evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area is evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas is evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	List of facts and figures about VMU LIBRARY
2.	Info about VMU licensed databases recommended for the social work studies

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

The study programme is being implemented in a higher education institution, i.e. in Vytautas Magnus University, which was established in 1922 and re-established in 1989. The second cycle study programme “Social Work” at VMU is registered following the Order of the Minister of Education and Science No. 565/1997-05-19 (renewed registration: 02.08.2001 No.1187 (61205S207); renewed registration: 2007-02-19, No. ISAK – 225; renewed registration: 2010-02-22, No. SR-16-01-8 (612L50003)) and implemented at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Faculty comprises of 4 departments: Education, Social Work, Sociology and Psychology. The Social Work Study Programme was designed and is implemented by the Social Work Department (SWD). The Department is associated with Social Work Competence Centre and cooperates with Distance Education, Study Quality Unit, Institute of Foreign Languages, Career Centre and other VMU divisions. The Programme is implemented in close cooperation with other departments of Social Sciences and faculties of VMU: Law, Humanities, Economics and Management (SER p. 4).

The Self-Assessment team was formed to analyse the implementation of the programme and to prepare the self-evaluation report.

The present review has been carried out under the guidelines and procedures of SKVC. Conducting evaluation of the Study Programme, the External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of December 20, 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The initial stage included the preparation of the self-assessment report by the University. This was read and commented on by the team of experts, after which the team visited the University on 7th December 2017. During the visit, the evaluation team had the opportunity to discuss the programme with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and social partners. The evaluators visited the library, offices, teaching space and facilities related to the programme.

After the visit, the expert group held a meeting for discussing and amending the content of the evaluation report to represent the opinion of the whole group.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was assembled according to the *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 7th of December 2017.

1. **Mr. Damien Courtney (team leader)**, *Fellow Emeritus CIT, Former Head of Faculty, Business and Humanities, Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland.*
2. **Prof. dr. Skaidrite Alma Gutmane**, *Professor, Rector, Latvian Christian Academy, Latvia.*
3. **Doc. dr. Marju Medar**, *Associate Professor, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia.*
4. **Mr. Saulius Davainis**, *Head of Social Activity Department, Republican Hospital of Kaunas, Lithuania.*
5. **Ms. Evelina Kripaitė**, *Student, Sociology and Criminology Study Programme, Vilnius University Lithuania.*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are well defined, clear, complement each other and are publicly accessible. The Programme aim and expected learning outcomes are published and periodically updated in an open vocational information, counselling and guidance platform “AIKOS”, on the University the FSS websites. The Programme staff regularly presents the Programme to Bachelor students during “Career Days”. The structure of the Programme, its aim and outcomes are presented to the fourth year Bachelor students during the last semester of their studies. The SPC members organize meetings with the students studying social work and present the aims of the Programme, learning outcomes as well as professional and employment opportunities. In addition, the latest information can be found in the annual magazine “Where to Study?” and an annual informational bulletin “Master Studies at Vytautas Magnus University” published by VMU.” (SER p.6).

The Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes correspond to the type and cycle of studies and the level of qualifications. The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes correspond to the international and national requirements regarding the type and level of studies: Dublin Descriptors (2004), Bologna process documents, National and European Qualifications Framework, Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (2010), general requirements for Masters' studies, descriptors of study cycles in Lithuania (2010, 2011) and professional requirements of Social Work (2015). The Programme aim and learning outcomes also comply with international and national professional values, objectives and requirements. This includes the International Definition of Social Work as well as the national Law on Social Services. The Programme learning outcomes correspond to the learning outcomes required by descriptors of the study field of social work at EQF level 7 (SER p. 8). During the meeting, the administration and the teaching staff expressed a deep understanding of academic and professional social work requirements. During the meetings, the students and the graduates demonstrated competencies of work in different SW areas, which require new strategic approaches, taking independent responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice, reflecting upon and researching practical activity in their organisations. Alumni work together with university teachers and students. Students' Master theses are of good quality. **It shows that the learning outcomes supplement each other and create a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to be acquired.**

The Programme aim and learning outcomes match the state, public and labour market needs, academic and professional requirements. The aim of the Programme is to prepare a critical reflective professional social worker who is able to work in any social work service or setting and integrate and use specific subject and research knowledge, values and skills, to efficiently address the life challenges that individuals, families and communities face in their well-being (SER p. 5). The aims of the Programme and the learning outcomes are developed on the basis of professional competencies of social work and are reflected in the statement of the self-evaluation report. Statistics and different analyses show that in Lithuania there has been a growing demand for qualified social workers in the labour market. This is the reason, why both forms (full-time and part-time studies) of the Programme are very popular among social work Bachelor graduates and social work practitioners (SER p. 10).

Learning outcomes are oriented to the ability of assessing critically one's and others' further individual learning needs and applying innovative social work professional knowledge together with practical and research methods, reflecting professional and learning experiences and their impact for social welfare. **The Programme aims and learning outcomes comply with academic and vocational requirements, society and labour market demands, and are compatible with global definition of social work and global standards for the education and training of the social work profession. Learning outcomes supplement each other and create a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to be acquired.**

The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes are related to the Lithuanian state strategies and labour market needs. The Study Programme of Social Work provides Masters' level university education in the field of Social Work that complies with European standards. The aims and the learning outcomes are related to the Lithuanian state strategies and labour market needs for educating social workers, who are able to coordinate social work processes in regions and communities, work with different client groups, organize and evaluate the changes in people's social functioning and the changes in society, based on social justice and human rights (SER p. 6-7).

The mission, operational objectives and strategy of the higher education institution are related to the Social Work Study Programme and understood by all stakeholders. The Masters' study programme is based on a humanistic approach, which has strong connections with the concept of *Artes Liberales*, which is related to the mission and the strategic planning of the university. Human wellbeing, human rights, values and intercultural communication are the basic approaches in the Social Work profession and education. In the evaluation report it is stated that the aim of the Study programme is to educate social work professionals for whom a human being is of inimitable value and who are able to act in permanently changing social work practice, perform social welfare research, participate in social policy formation and implementation, following principles of professional ethics. Thus, the Programme aim and learning outcomes comply with VMU mission and strategic plan (SER p. 7-8).

All learning outcomes of the Programme correspond to the main functions of advanced generalist practice as seen by foreign and national institutions, and foreign scholars. Graduates of the Social Work Masters' Programme organize and manage social work activities, implement social work research, administer, prepare and work in national and international projects and programmes, initiate new social services, participate in preparation and qualification programmes for social workers; design, implement and assess intervention, and work with

individuals, families, groups and communities. Graduates of the Masters' programme are working in social assistance departments of municipalities, statutory and non-statutory institutions of social services governed by the municipality as well as by non-governmental organizations (SER p. 9). During the evaluation meetings with students and alumni, they confirmed that they work in different positions at social welfare organisations and municipalities.

It was confirmed during the review meeting that the process of achieving learning outcomes involves the Programme teachers, students, alumni and stakeholders. They are all very active and interested in good results. The Programme Committee initiates the updating of learning outcomes taking into consideration the remarks of external experts, employers, students and teachers as well as the requirements of legal documents. **The aim and the learning outcomes of the Programme are periodically** (not less than once per three years) **reviewed. The Programme title, the intended learning outcomes, its content and granted qualification are in compliance with each other. Learning outcomes of the Programme are clearly stated, publicly available and realizable.** Information about the Programme aim and intended learning outcomes is easily accessible for students and stakeholders as it is disseminated in the VMU public domain (SER p. 10).

Graduates of the Social Work Master Programme may continue to study in the third-cycle of studies (postgraduate studies) in the area of social work, sociology, education and other social science programmes of doctoral studies (SER p. 4).

The second cycle Social Work Study Programme is one of the first Masters' study programmes in a Lithuanian university and has been provided since 1992. SWD is a member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the European Association of Schools of Social Work, and the Eastern European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work (SER p. 4).

The Study Programme of Social Work is implemented in close cooperation with other departments of Social Sciences and faculties of VMU making the Programme flexible, dynamic, up-to-date and involving the teachers from other faculties and departments of VMU in teaching and other activities. A good example of collaboration between the departments is the *Cluster of Sociology*, where cooperation in education and research is done.

Study Programme administration and teaching staff have good international partnerships in the area of education and research, e.g. in Finland (support in teaching PhD students), in USA (Loyola University Chicago) and in other countries mentioned in Annex 11 (network, conferences); Erasmus+ for student practice; international work in Africa for widening cultural perspectives; finances for scholarships to go to study abroad and for students attending national conferences.

Quality improvement is very important. Focus is on the quality of studies and activities to avoid students dropping out are a priority. A clear study Programme is presented to students at the start of their studies. Every year the Programme and the reference list of study courses is renewed. Exit service for students who defend and finish their studies is used, i.e. asking feedback about the quality of studies and the Programme.

The Study Programme benefits from good cooperation with its social partners (e.g. Caritas) and with policymakers at the ministry and municipality level, with students and alumni. Students and alumni participate in the Department's meetings. Students have seminars with alumni who come and talk about SW. Seminars for parents of disabled students and practical conferences on SW content are organized. There is also good collaboration with municipalities – a lot on seminars, conferences, training for practitioners are organized. The University has *Social Work Students' Club* and *Alumni Club* - festivals and conferences are organised together as part of the university's traditions.

VMU cooperates with other Lithuanian universities and was one of the founders of the Lithuanian Association of Social Work Schools in 2015. The SWD is a member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the European Association of Schools of Social Work, and the Eastern European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work. University has a good relationship with European SW schools, e.g. in Austria and the Netherlands.

The Study Programme has strong administration and teaching staff who are well informed about SW issues and related SW topics. Teachers' development is supported by the administration team (minimum 2 visits per year to South Africa, USA or Europe). Good staff teamwork is evident. Teachers have good contacts with students and alumni. Students stated in the review meeting that the uniqueness of this Programme lies in the fact that during their studies it is

possible to meet with professors to discuss and solve problems as they arise. There is also good supervision.

2.2. Curriculum design

The Curriculum meets all Legal Requirements. The Programme is structured on the basis of the existing legal Lithuanian and VMU documents. The Programme implementation is performed in compliance with VMU Study Regulations, Code of Academic Ethics, VMU Statute (SER p.11; Annex 1).

The Programme Structure: the Programme has been developed within the Lithuanian qualifications' framework and is in full agreement with the European Bologna process requirements. Curriculum design is compliant with the aims set by the Vytautas Magnus University as a University of Liberal Arts. A strong liberal spirit is evident throughout the Curriculum design. The aims of the study Programme conform with the Vytautas Magnus University mission and are oriented towards the development and training of good specialists.

The content and implementation of the Curriculum ensures its sustainable development and meets the four main aims of higher education. Study subjects, workloads, objectives, expected learning outcomes, the number of hours intended for lectures, seminars and independent study, study methods are determined for each subject (SER p 11; Annex 2). The expected learning outcomes of the whole Programme determine the subjects to be studied, their sequence and links between subjects. In summary, the **Programme meets the general requirements for the second cycle degree study programmes.**

The aims of the study programme correspond to the Vytautas Magnus University mission and reflect four main aims of the higher education: the solution of problems related to personality, the promotion of democratic society, the development of science, and meeting labour market demands. National and local needs as well as those of students and stakeholders are considered in developing and implementing of the Curriculum (SER p. 5-10).

The aims and tasks of the Curriculum design are clear, attainable and verifiable, the study content of the Curriculum corresponds to the awarded qualification and the title of the study programme. The Programme content reflects level 7 knowledge, skills and competencies indicated in the EQF descriptors. The Programme content matches global standards for the

education and training of the social work profession. The Programme covers five main areas which are recommended in the Description of Study Field of Social Work. (SER p. 12; Annexes 1, 2, 9).

Curriculum design includes clear defensible rationale. It contains explicit course descriptions, clearly articulated scope and sequence. The modules and subjects are evenly spread and properly sequenced, with no unnecessary repetition. The Programme's subjects is organized within three clusters: 1) Conceptualization of Social Work Practice; 2) Rights-based Social Work Research; 3) Self-reflective Social Work Practice and leadership. Subjects of this cluster provide a thorough understanding of the systemized theoretical approaches about changes and perspectives of social work theories **Each module and subject is consistent with and appropriate for this level of studies** (SER p. 12; Annexes 1, 2, 16; Meetings with teaching staff, students and alumni).

Study Subjects (modules): Subjects are not overlapping in their content. Scientific research work of the academic staff is closely related to the study courses they teach.

Subjects' Contents and study methods: The contents of subjects offer insights into Social Welfare Policy; they offer a good insight into Social Work research development, and optional subjects in a wide spectrum.

The Content of the Study Programme is in harmony with the stated learning outcomes. During class work, various study methods are used: brainstorming, focus groups, project methods, cooperative learning, role play, interpersonal exchange, visualizing of situations, learning-by-doing, experiential learning (seminars inside and outside), and debates. During the meeting with students it was confirmed that student feedback regarding the evaluation of teaching is very high (SER p. 13; Meetings with teaching staff, students and alumni).

Curriculum design benefits students and helps staff to teach efficiently. Students are working independently in the field of practice placements, preparing research papers and other practical tasks, presenting their own and commenting upon peer prepared work. Students gave a feedback that the delivery of the Programme allows sufficient scope for the achievement of the prescribed learning outcomes (SER p. 13; Meetings with teaching staff, students and alumni).

Scientific research work of the academic staff is closely related to study courses they teach.

The thesis is prepared following the general order of final thesis preparation and defense approved by the university. The requirements are prepared at the SWD. Methodological requirements for the thesis are prepared taking into account the Programme aim and relevance to the Social Work study field. Requirements, criteria and the thesis preparation schedule are announced publicly on the FC information system, The VMU Moodle system is discussed with the Masters' students at the beginning of their studies. Students have their supervisors' support while preparing their theses. During the meeting with students and alumni it was confirmed that student feedback regarding supervising their thesis is very high (SER p. 12-13; Meetings with administration and teaching staff, alumni and students).

The curriculum of part-time studies matches the full-time curriculum with regard to the list of study subjects, credits and contact hours but differs in its duration. Part-time students can study for three years. During the meeting with students and alumni, they were satisfied with curriculum design and the study process of the Social Work study programme (SER p. 14; Annex 15).

Programme Scope and Content: As social work identity is in crisis and suffering from over-bureaucratization the dynamics of democracy underpinned by the development of a welfare state often intervened in order to satisfy the social and economic needs of individuals. The topic of social work in Europe and the European Social Agenda is considered in several subjects including "Comparative Social Welfare Policy". The following topics are included in this subject: 1) the context of European requirements; 2) human rights' requirements and cultural context; 3) modern and most relevant social welfare questions – public and private relations, citizen participation, non-discrimination, and cohesion (Annex 2). "Management in Community Social Work" is another pertinent subject in this regard.

An interdisciplinary view of the interconnection between Social Work and Social Entrepreneurship should be valued as innovative. There is a need for a special study course in Social Entrepreneurship.

2.3. Teaching staff

The Programme teachers' qualifications are sufficient to achieve the Programme aim and learning outcomes, and they comply with the above-mentioned regulations. Academic staff

of the Programme consists of 11 teachers, 3 professors, 4 associated professors, 4 lecturers (10 of them have PhD degrees). The Programme has increased its staff qualification by employing one teacher with a newly gained PhD in social work (SER p. 15).

The teaching and the research experience of the academic staff is sufficient for the attainment of learning outcomes. They are actively involved in research activities, develop their own professional qualifications and disseminate their research results. The researchers of the Department review doctoral dissertations, are supervisors of doctoral students, review scientific articles and are members of various associations and professional groups. They are organizers and participants in international events and actively participate in scientific, methodological and administrative events in Lithuania and abroad. Participation in research, applied or studies-related projects has become more usual, providing new possibilities for teachers and students to gain the newest and evidence-based knowledge and perspectives on the most recent and relevant issues of social work. The number of publications has increased over the past five years. On average, one teacher with academic qualifications publishes two research articles per year in national and international academic journals. Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well as in social work supervision (SER p.15). Students and graduates confirmed in the review meeting that the teachers are competent and highly qualified specialists who are able to maintain cooperative and equal relations with students.

The number of academic staff is sufficient. The ratio between the academic staff and the students is appropriate, which gives an opportunity for teachers to deal with students individually and support the attainment of learning outcomes. Students reported in the evaluation meeting that they have enough time and supervision from teachers to obtain practical skills and to discuss theoretical materials in depth. The student/teacher ratio is suitable for reaching the Programme outcomes. The ratio of teachers and students meets VMU requirements. 11 teachers supervise the Social Work Masters' theses of the Programme. The teacher/student ratio is 1-4 students per teacher. Teaching staff is supported by the services of VMU Information System Office staff, which is responsible for the reliability of VMU study technology, and supplies teachers with the technological equipment necessary for lectures (SER p. 15).

The distribution of teachers' workload between teaching and other activities is regulated by VMU Rector's Orders. During the visit, teachers reported that the academic work is planned for teachers in accordance with the principles of the pedagogical workload of university academic and research staff of the University. The academic workload of teachers is flexible and gives

teachers the possibility of developing their own academic qualifications in the area of personal research

(SER p. 16).

The qualifications of the academic staff of the Programme are ensured by applying the University system of competition and assessment. VMU administration creates the conditions necessary for teachers' professional development. VMU teachers and researchers are evaluated every five years. Teachers have a plan of research activities and finance to implement it. Teachers compile the information on their professional development and it is stored at the SWD and VMU IT system managed by the University's Research Office. The Attestation Committee formed by the VMU Senate performs the evaluation of teachers' and researchers' qualifications (SER p. 16). Students and graduates reported that teachers assist students' academic and non-academic activities during their studies and support them in furthering their professional development as well as helping them find a job.

Teachers have a plan of research activities and financing depending on productivity. Since 2008, VMU has introduced a system for promoting teachers' qualifications and scientific activities, which provides salary rates and bonuses according to scientific productivity and activities indicated in the teachers' annual reports. The system of qualifications development, rewards, opportunities for international exchange increase the quality of the studies as well as the Programme staff's competences (SER p. 16).

The University supports the professional development of teachers with good working conditions and teachers' involvement. Teaching staff participate in conferences, seminars, courses, internships and mobility programmes, research traineeships and training, actively uses the Erasmus+ programme, the University Bilateral Agreements and other academic mobility measures. Teachers are active members of international and national Social Work organizations, which enhance their professional expertise, e.g. in the European Social Work Research Association, the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG), and the National Association of Social Work with Groups (SER p. 17).

The Programme teachers share their expertise in a variety of ways: committees of scientific conferences, editorial boards of academic journals, publishing articles in mass media, open lectures for society, participating in TV and radio broadcasts. Since 2008 SWD publishes a journal "Social Work: Practice and Experience" twice a year. The journal aims to consolidate the professional identity of social work in the articles, which analyse social work professional

experiences and methods. Several international scientific events were organized by SWD in the period, 2011-2016. The International Conference “Social Work for Social Development”, International Summer School of Supervisors “TRUST – Building Trust through Supervision”, and International Congress on Supervision “Human Phenomena in Organization: Insights of Supervision” were organized in 2012 (SER p. 17).

Teaching staff have a good knowledge of social work theory and teaching skills for applying it to Social Work practice. There are good relations between team members at both administration and teaching staff level (meetings with teaching staff and administrators).

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

Teachers and students have good facilities and equipment that is appropriate for the attainment of the learning outcomes of the programme. The Programme has been provided since 1992. General study subjects are generally delivered in the central buildings of VMU. Since 2014 Programme subjects have been mainly delivered in the new FSS building (shared together with the Faculty of Law) with a sufficient number of classrooms and additional spaces for individual, group work and consultations (SER p. 4).

The learning environment is customized for disabled people. There is a lift, ramps for wheelchairs, adjusted WCs on the Faculty premises. It should be noted that Mykolas Romeris library (one of the Vytautas Magnus University branches, which is in the Faculty) is equipped with special workplaces for students with special needs and has such devices as foot switchers for transcribing texts, special keyboards and video magnifiers for visually impaired students (SER p. 19).

Students have good learning conditions, suitable classrooms, laboratories, practice places: All the classrooms that are used for Programme implementation are computerized with the necessary software. There is accessible and free Wi-Fi, multimedia equipment, and one room is equipped for videoconferencing. Two subjects: “Participatory Action and Qualitative Research to Advance Social Justice: A Global Perspective” and “Global Social Work: Reflective Practice for Justice and Peace” are taught via videoconferencing with the Masters in Social Work Programme at Loyola University Chicago (USA). There is a sufficient number of printers,

laptops, voice recorders and other equipment in the Social Work Department (SER pp. 13, 19 and Annex 2).

Cooperation between the SWD, governmental agencies and NGOs in the form of a long list of social work internship places offers opportunities for students to choose the organisation they want. A tripartite agreement specifies the rights and the duties of student, practice place and University (SER p. 20). During the meetings between the SWD and the Practice Group the feedback from students and practice institutions is discussed.

The Library is equipped according to the required standard. The quantity, quality and relevance of reading materials matches the needs of students. Vytautas Magnus University library ensures necessary resources (books, journals, articles, methodological materials) for the Programme implementation. Students can use more than 20 databases, which can be accessed from the library webpage and some databases can be also accessed via remote access (SER p. 20).

Students are trained in ‘learning to learn’ techniques. The information about practice places, methodological publications, recommendations regarding independent work and other useful information is made available in Moodle (SER p. 20). (Meetings with students and alumni)

2.5. Study process and students’ performance assessment

Entrance requirements are justified, consistent and transparent. Full-time studies last for 2 years (120 credits) and Part-time studies last for 3 years. Students are awarded the Master of Social Work. Students from Colleges have to undertake bridging studies – general and specific courses of Social Work (SER p. 2).

Organization of the study process ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Students have micro level practice (main focus on studying a case) and macro level practice. Students need to see the social work environment, get acquainted with different places and then choose where they want to undertake their internship. Students can undertake practice in their home cities (coordinator of practice in university calls and visits the practice place). Students have practical subjects and non-practical subjects. The majority of Masters’ Programme students work as Social Workers. Students have to make presentation about their internship (submit a written report and present it orally). If

students have problems in the practice place, they can go to their mentors and supervisors. Practice assessment takes the form of discussion. Students noted that it is useful to know the theory and to put it into practice. In reports, they have to write what theory they have used to solve a case. They have additional seminars/consultations about methodology (in second year, second semester). Alumni noted that theoretical knowledge is a strong point of this Programme. It was mentioned that practical work is not possible without theoretical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge can help to explain clients' behaviour. Alumni also suggested organizing meetings with social workers from different countries to share their experiences. Students suggested including in the Programme more lectures about the issues of disabled people and about addictions (Meetings with students, teachers, social partners and alumni).

The Programme students take an active part in research and work together with teachers who supervise their research projects and theses, e.g. more than 10 joint publications with students are published (SER p. 18; Annex 4).

Students are encouraged to take part in scientific, artistic or applied activities. Teachers ask students to read about various subjects (research area). They take some cases from PhD studies and discuss them. Students participate in the writing of articles with teachers. Two Master theses received national awards in social studies in Lithuania (Meeting with teaching staff).

Students have the possibilities to take part in the mobility programmes. However, they mostly do not participate in these (two students from the Masters' programme took part in an Erasmus exchange in 2016). Some of the students think that it is because they do not know foreign languages, have family commitments or jobs (Meeting with students and alumni).

The higher education institution ensures proper academic and social support. Students have opportunities to receive scholarships and loans. Two students got scholarships for good grades (for one of them the grade point average is 9.6). (Meeting with students).

The University supports disabled students in different ways; environmental support and special technologies for study as well as Moodle, and computers with Braille facilities.

The system of assessing student achievements is clear, made public and appropriate to assess the learning outcomes. Teachers use simulated practice methods, 3D games – diaries, reflections via e-mail (created in Paris), group work – experiential learning, and role-play

methods. Visual methods – movies, videos, digital storytelling (students make digital films about their practice places), special films, visuals (in crisis intervention, about violence, the holocaust) are also practiced. Supervision methods and critical reflection are used (criteria – use not only personal views but also put theoretical knowledge into practice). Teachers invite people such as persons with a disability to lecture. Assessment methods include self-reflections and essays. A framework is provided by the University for cumulative grading. All assessments should be divided into parts. Students also take mid-term exams. (Meetings with students, teachers, social partners and alumni).

Professional activities of the majority of programme graduates correspond to the expectations of programme managers and employers. Social partners and employers noted that it is very important that the university community is very involved in municipal activities. They do a lot of research together. Some of them stated that VMU students have very strong theoretical knowledge. Most of the graduates work in the Social Work fields or in practice institutions. Students gain knowledge on how different institutions work. University influences the students' attitudes regarding clients as discussions are held about issues of attitude in the university. Students focus on what they want to achieve, they have a very serious attitude towards work, and they are highly motivated. (Meetings with social partners and alumni).

The programme corresponds to the state's future economic, social and cultural developmental needs. Employers noted that because of VMU graduates, the children welfare centre "Pastogė" was created. VMU is also the home of the Supervisors' Association. The University is supporting supervisors as it is not registered as a profession yet. (SER p. 30).

Fair learning environment is ensured. Free databases and textbooks are available for every student. Every course has its account in Moodle where there is information about lectures and reading materials. In addition, the university has several libraries (SER p. 20).

Students are provided with the opportunity to launch complaints and appeals in accordance with clear, public and transparent procedures.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decision-making regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme are clearly defined. University documents regulate the

Programme's management process and procedures. The University Statute, VMU Regulations on Studies, VMU Order on study Programme quality assurance provide, define and describe the principles of quality assurance of studies and research, distribution of responsibility in study quality assurance, and study quality assurance processes in the development, implementation and improvement of study Programmes (SER p. 31).

Internal quality assurance mechanisms are clear, effective and updated regularly. The study Programme Committee is the main Programme management body, although the Programme management is divided into several levels – Head of SWD, Dean and the Faculty Council. The Committee, created by a decision of the Dean, consists of a fixed number of teaching staff, students' representatives, alumni and social partners in order for all stakeholders to be included in the decision-making process. The Committee meetings are regular and its decisions are implemented in the SWD by the study administrators. Regular Study Programme Committee activities, such as study quality analyses during the meetings with the Department, development of new study materials, teachers' involvement in research and professional activities, student surveys, ensure the quality of the implementation of the Programme (SER p. 30).

Feedback from the stakeholders of the study programme is collected and analysed regularly. Feedback is used to improve the programme. All stakeholders (teachers, students, social partners, alumni) **are involved in the appropriate aspects of programme management and administration.** During the meeting, it was confirmed that student feedback regarding teaching is recorded for every study subject by filing individually electronic questionnaires and the results of these evaluations are used for improving teaching. Programme alumni confirmed that they also participate in the evaluation of the Programme not only as a representatives of the Study Programme Committee, but also give feedback annually on the Programme quality (Meeting with students, alumni and social partners).

All stakeholders provide their input into the evaluation and improvement process of the Programme: staff and students collaborate with social work organizations. Lecturers present their suggestions regarding the Programme improvement in the Department and the Faculty. Social partners make suggestions regarding labour market requirements and students provide their opinions via surveys through representation in the Study Programme Committee. It can be concluded that the participation of all stakeholders in the Programme management is sufficient. (Meeting with students, alumni and social partners).

University promotes the study programme publicly. Information about the Programme aim and intended learning outcomes is easily accessible for students and other stakeholders as it is announced in the VMU public domain (VMU website, FC information system) (SER p. 31).

Alumni and social partners are actively involved into the marketing process. The Programme staff and students continuously collaborate with social work organizations, the municipality and politicians. Their representatives are invited to lectures, seminars, fora, conferences, and discussions. That helps to enrich the Programme with practical and political perspectives. SWD teachers provide training and professional supervision for social work practitioners. (Meeting with students, teaching staff, alumni and social partners).

Students with disabilities receive social support from the university. One of the strategic goals of the faculty is to cherish the dignity of the person, to foster community, respect, equity and social responsibility. This means that discrimination or intolerance is not acceptable among Faculty members. The Faculty and SWD create an open and friendly environment for people with special needs as well as for all members of the community. There is special equipment for studies and for moving across the campus for students with a disability (SER p. 33; Meetings with students and teachers).

2.7. Examples of excellence

- 1. Good learning and teaching atmosphere as a guarantee for reaching the learning outcomes at a high level.** Students are oriented towards learning and teachers towards teaching. The study Programme has clear aims, tasks and evaluation. The best Masters' theses have received social studies awards. During the writing of the theses students undertake action research and use an ethical values approach. Student papers are presented, discussed and reflected upon during the seminars. Students and social partners have good contact with the University and practice places including the municipality. Interpretative methods are used in practice.
- 2. Well-qualified teachers have a high standard of teaching.** Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well as in social work supervision, have good research experiences and English language skills. Teachers use attractive and innovative teaching methods, such as *Reflective practice; Story telling as a new SW model; Users' involvement in the learning process; Collaborative research; Participation in action research; Case management; Problem solving and critical thinking approaches;*

Experiential learning, Visual methods, movies and videos. Students can create short films in placements. Disability friendly approaches are used in teaching.

3. **The programme is supported by a good university structure and a wide range of high-quality resources** including physical facilities, databases, software programmes, simulation licenses, subscription of case-study repositories and the like. The Library is well-equipped and offers access to the majority of internationally well-known electronic databases. Different European programmes, such as Horizon 2020, are used effectively for the funding of research and development projects. The Vice Rector is actively involved in a UN programme.
4. **Study process is supported by different facilities and learning resources**, such as effective working IT support, well-organized study processes, students' assessment systems and specialised textbooks. The Study Programme incorporates innovative methodologies for improving and changing the study process and the curriculum. There are three mechanisms in place to ensure that the Programme content corresponds to the latest academic, artistic and technological achievements: student comments and feedback; stakeholder and alumni feedback; and teaching staff input.
5. **The programme management meets the standards of higher education.** The study Programme has a well-organized Programme management. Programme management enjoys good relationships with the Ministry and the social municipalities, and all partners are well informed about developments related to the Social Work Programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) There should be more European Commission normative documents relating to innovations in Social work included. The dynamics of democracy are ensured by the development of a welfare state that increasingly intervenes in order to satisfy the social and economic needs of individuals. There should be analysis of current European democracy developments. A course on the Development of Associative Democracy should be included.
- 2) There is a need for more specific studies in the area of disability, addiction and supervision. Students need to learn how to work with disabled people and how to work with people with different addictions.
- 3) Elective subjects should be considered for inclusion in the Programme. For example, the review team agrees that the interdisciplinary view of the interconnection between Social Work and Social Entrepreneurship is innovative. There is a need for a special study course in Social Entrepreneurship.
- 4) There should be continuing development of in-service training, conferences for and with its partners and the region for achieving new competences.
- 5) The need to attract more foreign teachers as outlined in the evaluation report remains relevant in order to increase staff diversity. This is a good way of strengthening the teaching staff and of enhancing the internalization of the Programme.

IV. SUMMARY

The Vytautas Magnus University is a University with a human face, a warm and positive environment, where students with special needs feel welcome. The University has a good reputation. It is the first Social Work Masters' Programme in a Lithuanian university and it was distinguished as a very good Social Work Masters' study Programme in the journal 'Reitings' in 2016. (SER p. 4).

The Master of Social Work Study Programme is a well-functioning Programme which was highly praised by the people interviewed as well as by the evaluation team. The objectives and intended learning outcomes are well-defined, clear, and publicly announced. The Programme is linked well to the state, societal and labour market needs. It is also linked with the mission and vision of the Vytautas Magnus University. The aim and learning outcomes correspond to the requirements of second cycle studies in Lithuania. The title of the Programme, intended learning outcomes, the content of the Programme and the qualification are in harmony. The study Programme is presented to students at the start of their studies in a clear manner.

Social Work in Europe and the European Social Agenda are discussed in several subjects. Topics considered include the context of European requirements; human rights requirements in a cultural context; and the most modern and relevant social welfare questions: public and private relations, citizen participation, non-discrimination and cohesion.

An appropriate range of second-cycle study methods and assessment instruments are used during the Programme delivery. Teachers of the Social Work Study Programme have a high standard of teaching. Teaching methods are innovative and include storybooks. They use attractive and innovative teaching methods, such as reflective practice, storytelling, users' involvement in the learning process, collaborative research and others, which are highly appreciated by students. The Programme has highly motivated students, who are active in different stages and levels of the study process.

The Study process is supported by different facilities and learning resources, such as through effectively working IT support, a well organized study process, students' assessment system and specialised textbooks. The study Programme has innovative methodologies for improving and changing the study process and curriculum. There are three mechanisms in place to ensure that the Programme content corresponds to the latest academic, artistic and technological

achievements: student comments and feedback; stakeholder and alumni feedback; and input from teaching staff.

The Programme is delivered by 11 teachers (10 of them have a PhD degree). Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well in social work supervision and have good experience in research and good English speaking skills. Teaching staff is supported by the services of VMU Information System Office staff, which is responsible for the effective working of VMU study technology and which supplies teachers with the technological equipment necessary for lectures. The age structure of the teaching staff is favourable for the implementation and development of the Programme. Motivation and enthusiasm among the Programme staff is high. Teachers of the Programme are active researchers in the academic and applied area, and their research output is demonstrated in different national and international peer reviewed journals. Staff of the Programme demonstrate outstanding professional pedagogical development, mobility, internal and external co-operation. The EU, VMU and Science Research Council supports research and participation in international conferences. Teachers demonstrate strong teamwork, they are warm and engaging, and share a strong culture of dialogue with their partners.

Students are oriented towards learning and teachers towards teaching. The study Programme has clear aims, tasks and evaluation processes. The best Masters' theses have received social studies awards. In the preparation of theses students have used an action research and ethical values approach. Student papers are presented, discussed and reflected upon during the seminars. Students and social partners maintain good contact with the university and practice places, including the municipality. Interpretative methods are used in practice.

The Programme is supported by a good university structure and a wide range of high-quality resources including physical facilities, data-bases, software programmes, simulation licenses, subscription to case-study repositories and the like. The Library is well-equipped and offers access to the majority of internationally well-known electronic databases. Different European programmes, such as Horizon 2020, are used effectively for funding research and development projects. The Vice Rector is actively involved in a relevant UN programme.

Student admission is carried out online and all the information about the admission process and requirements is conveniently presented on the website. VMU has introduced a system of teachers' qualifications and scientific activities promotion, which forms the basis for providing salary rates and bonuses based on teachers' scientific productivity.

Students and teachers have support (Erasmus+) from the university for going abroad to learn, teach and practise. Good balance of theory and practise is a major strength of this Programme which is supported by Social Work research. The University ensures proper academic support for the students enrolled.

The quality assurance processes, the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies, committees and positions are well described. The University has implemented a student feedback and improvement system. It was recognised during the evaluation meeting that the management is very proactive and brave in implementing changes for improving the operations and quality, and searching for new, even innovative ways. Management works closely with the teaching staff.

The Programme management meets the standards of high education. Programme management enjoys good relationships with the Ministry and the municipalities, and all partners are well-informed about developments related to the social work Programme. Students, partners and alumni are involved in the qualitative development of the study Programme. They have regular meetings with the Study Programme Committee. The University has implemented student feedback as part of an improvement system. Management works closely with the teaching staff.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Social Work (state code – 621L50004/ 6211JX060) at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	4
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	4
	Total:	22

*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.

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