SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

ŠIAULIŲ UNIVERSITETO
PROGRAMOS *KULTŪROS STUDIJOS* (621V91001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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EVALUATION REPORT
OF *CULTURE STUDIES* (621V91001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
AT SIAULIAI UNIVERSITY

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Kultūros studijos
Valstybinis kodas	621V91001
Studijų sritis	Humanitariniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Istorija, filosofija, teologija ir kultūros studijos
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Kultūrologijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2009-08-31 Nr.1-73

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INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Cultural studies
State code	621V91001
Study area	Humanities
Study field	History, Philosophy, Theology and Cultural Studies
Kind of the study programme	University
Study Cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Cultural Studies
Date of registration of the study programme	31-08-2009, No.1-73

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

The second cycle study programme of Cultural Studies is run by the Department of History (and the Department of Philosophy and Anthropology) of the Faculty of Humanities, pursuant to all the legal acts of the country and to the regulations of the University. It was self-evaluated by a team led by Prof. PhD Arūnas Gumuliauskas and composed of five coordinators (1 Professor and 3 Associate Professors), each responsible for a part of the assessment, and eight drafters (1 Professor, 4 Associate Professors, 1 graduate and 1 student), but no external member (academic or stakeholder) has been involved. The programme is implemented by teachers from other faculties (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social Sciences), as well as from other science and education institutions. It is staffed by 5 Professors, 8 Associate Professors and 3 lecturers. The tasks of the present self-evaluation are clearly defined, and the report (32 p.) as a whole is precise and comprehensive. This new program has not yet been externally evaluated.

The experts note that this is one of the two master degree programmes training cultural studies specialists in Lithuania, and that it is the only such program which aims to fill local and national needs.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes have been described with a sort of idealistic vision. The programme's resources, however, are not sufficient for it to work well. The aims defined do not correspond to reality; they are too ambitious for the University at this moment. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that it might become more feasible in the future. The staff is not a coherent team, as the teachers come from different backgrounds and the team does not have a clear full-time leader or leaders with strong specialization and publications in cultural studies. Also, the quality of students does not match all defined aims and outcomes. So, for instance, there are many books listed in the course descriptions, but some students said that they usually read only one or two items from the "Required reading" list, and did not read items from the rather extensive "Recommended reading" lists. Their foreign (English) language skills are generally better than those of their teachers, but still not sufficient to "develop cross-cultural cooperation, conduct and administer cultural and cross-cultural projects" and to "integrate into [..] the European research area." The real learning outcomes thus may not correspond to the programme's aims.

At the same time, the evaluation committee members noted the good level of the Master's degree theses, which indicate a positive learning output. Research topics are chosen in relation to the programme and to the students' interests and background; a variety of research methods are used. Theoretical literature is in Lithuanian and in other (mainly English) languages. This is a promising aspect of the CS programme. High scholarly standards should be maintained in the future.

The self-assessment describes learning outcomes with the expression "The person awarded a Master's degree in Culturology must…", but these outcomes seem unrealistic. Outcomes related to students' ethical or moral stance, such as "**demonstrate** tolerance towards and acceptance of cultural diversity, a responsible attitude to work", or "**acquire** moral values, adhere to ethical principles", are difficult, if not impossible to measure.

2. Curriculum design

The programme consists of obligatory and optional study subjects. In the third semester students have their practice in a variety of institutions. Semester 4 is allotted to the preparation of the Master's thesis. Structurally, the curriculum design meets legal requirements, and the importance given to the practice and final thesis allows students to develop research skills and competencies.

Interviews with the students indicate that the programme may not be as demanding as it aims to be: course headings and descriptions seem demand more than what is actually delivered. Many courses have more than five "Required reading" items (four courses have 6, four – 7, two – 9 and one has 10 items), and several of the "Recommended reading" lists have more than 10 items. Nearly all students get good and very good marks on the exams, and dropout rates are low. CS graduates who are awarded the diploma with merit make up over 1/3 of all graduates. During the entire period only one student left the programme because of academic failure.

Thematically, the curriculum represents a combination of two specialities: cultural studies and culture management. Furthermore, the degree awarded is in "culturology," a field different from "cultural studies" as practiced in the European Union. The combination of specializations might be confusing to potential employers; former students noted that potential employers do not always have a clear understanding of what the graduates can do. This opinion was also expressed by social partners and employers, who had a variety of expectations regarding the graduates' skills and knowledge. There was no agreement on which aspects of the programme are more important; when asked if the programme should concentrate more on practice or theory, for example, some social partners saw no need for theory and stressed project

management skills, while other felt strongly that theoretical knowledge was most important because it gives graduates creative and unconventional ideas and inspiration.

In some cases the programme's content can hardly be characterized as reflecting the latest achievements in science, art and technologies. The self-evaluation report states "CS learning outcomes focused on providing knowledge of current theoretical problems and perspectives in anthropology (ethnology). That was reflected in CS structure, and such subjects as *Ethnomethodology* and *Ethnomusicology* were introduced". Unfortunately, *Ethnomusicology* turned out to be unsuccessful, and although the syllabus for that course lists many required and optional readings about Lithuanian traditional music, it does not include any sources in theories of ethnomusicology or anthropology. The report mentions that this course was replaced by *Semiotics of culture* in order to "develop students' skills to perform structural analysis of texts and practices", but that course also focuses on disciplines other than anthropology, and does not engage current ethnology scholarship.

3. Staff

The Šiauliai University self-evaluation report shows the programme's offhand approach towards academic traditions of Cultural Studies (the program's content is closer to the scholarly traditions of Soviet and post-Soviet "culturology"). In terms of international collaboration, there is no relation to the Western academic world of Cultural Studies (neither in teachers' publishing activities nor in teachers' mobility). During the interviews the experts were happy to find that some teachers (e.g. Liutauras Kraniauskas) were conscious about putting the core authors of British cultural studies in their course syllabus; but generally „the courses delivered", „the subject-related research papers, study books" as well as „projects, applied, experimental research" of the teachers show that the majority of the them do not follow this tendency and do not try to ground their courses in the Cultural Studies tradition as it is broadly understood in the West.

The research interests of the majority of CS teachers are often linked to the modules they are teaching but overall they have little connection with Cultural Studies. A typical, but not isolated example here could be Assoc. prof. J. Mackevičiūtė who, according to the report „has got a long-term experience in delivering module *Philosophy of culture*". This pedagogical experience was taken into account for designing the subject *Methodological orientation in cultural studies*, but the teacher specializes in philosophy and ethics and her only subject-related publication for that course is a study book „Foundation course on applied ethics" (co-authored with J. Balčiūnaitė).

The qualifications of the teachers comprise cultural semiotics, education, project management, communication and human protection, labour market, archaeology, medieval and modern history, teaching (educology), sport industry, Lithuanian language, ethnomusicology, public governance, social science management, literary anthropology etc. Overall, CS are represented poorly in this pool. One of the programme's core instructors for CS, Prof. Gintautas Mažeikis, is now Head of the Department at VMU (where he is also a Chairperson of the PhD theses defence commission). He no longer holds the position of Head of the Department and director of the Centre for Social Anthropology at ŠU, and he will not be able to lead this programme.

The site visit confirmed weaknesses in the teaching staff as expressed in the report: A lack of teacher mobility and poor knowledge of English are key problems. The diversified knowledge of other foreign languages (German, Polish, Russian) is very valuable, but it cannot replace English language skills for international communication. Also, although some teachers are reported to know, for instance, German, there was no sign of any intensive scholarly cooperation with German-speaking countries. This section of the report also says that „it is complicated for teachers to do internships abroad for longer than 1 month during the academic year. No theoreticians and practitioners from abroad have delivered CS modules so far".

4. Facilities and learning resources

The premises for studies altogether are adequate. The Faculty of Humanities is located in two places, one of which will be renovated before September 2013. The small CS student groups seem to cause no problems in finding appropriate classrooms. Classrooms are equipped with projectors and computers, and wireless internet access is provided. No special laboratory equipment is needed.

The recently reconstructed library of Šiauliai University is impressive, and it seems to be one of the most modern libraries in Lithuania. There are large and small work places, including individual and small group rooms that may be reserved by students or teachers. Some of the large work rooms are not equipped with electrical outlets at the desks, making work with personal computers difficult or impossible.

There is a good supply of library resources needed for the programme. Generally, the Lithuanian titles have multiple copies, whereas there is usually one copy of a foreign (English) book - this is not sufficient if the items are in the "Required reading" list. Holdings of the most recent academic literature on cultural studies are scattered, and one might wish for more current books among the programme-specific library resources.

Students know about databases, and named EBSCO as the one they use most often; they were not, however, knowledgeable about European journals where current Cultural Studies research is published. Librarians provide individual consultations for the student's work with online databases.

5. Study process and student assessment

The admission procedure to the study programme is clear. No entrance examination is required. Instructors use a variety of methods, mainly seminar discussions, but also lectures and student presentations. Students have practical activities, including fieldwork to document culture in Šiauliai and elsewhere in Lithuania. A cumulative score system is used for student assessment. Professors explain grading procedures on the first day of class, and students believe that the grading process is fair and transparent. Although some students drop out during the first year, the students who remain are all passing courses, usually earning grades of 7 or above.

Students are provided with ample academic and social support. The programme staff makes great effort to accomodate students who are working while studying. Lectures are held in the afternoons, for example, so students can go to their day job in the morning. One student mentioned that her professor would even come to the student's workplace for consultations on her research project. In this situation, however, there is little that the university can do to help expand student mobility: Jobs and family responsibilities unfortunately make it impossible for most students to travel abroad on exchange.

Students and alumni gave mixed reports about the relation between the programme and job opportunities. Several reported ideal results: Practice at a museum or other cultural institution turned into a job after graduation. Two current students seem to have a good chance of eventually being employed by their current practice hosts. Other alumni pointed out that potential employers sometimes did not know about the programme or the skills and qualifications that came with a diploma. This caused difficulties in finding a job after graduation. It seems that the job opportunities in Šiauliai are limited, but it is not clear if there might be other jobs available in the larger region of North Lithuania. If there is a shortage of jobs, then it would be appropriate to discuss the possibility of admitting students once every two years, not every year.

The programme balances instruction between culture studies theory on the one hand, and practical skills such as project management on the other hand. Discussion with social partners revealed some who prefer that graduates focus more on acquiring practical skills, while others believe that theoretical frames and analytical skills are most useful, because they help

students find creative solutions to assignments; they think that practical skills are best learned on the job. The discussion simply indicated that this issue will continue to be important, and that it is essential to maintain a balance between theory and practice.

Student groups are relatively small: from 5 to 9 students. This facilitates rather direct, almost personal communication between teaching staff and students, and, according to some teachers, promotes a friendly atmosphere. On the other hand, such small groups cannot be cost-effective, and sooner or later may lead to financial complications, therefore a possibility to join the I and II year student groups in the autumn semester might be considered.

6. Programme management

Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the programme's implementation are clearly allocated, but this seems to be more a formality and not an operating system. The main body for monitoring the programme's quality is the Group for Monitoring the Quality of Master Study Programme Cultural Studies (GMQ of CS), headed by Prof. A. Gumuliauskas. As one can see in the Annexes, the study quality of the Cultural Studies programme at Šiauliai University is positively evaluated by only 37.5% students; the percentage is significantly higher in the Faculty of Humanities (60.0%) and in Šiauliai University as a whole (55.4%). There are no analyses of these low evaluations, or proposals for possible solutions, from the GMQ of CS.

Information and data on the programme's implementation are collected and analysed; students are given opinion surveys upon entering the university, and later surveys request suggestions for improvements. These suggestions have been taken into consideration, for example, when unqualitative courses *Ethnomusicology* and *Sport industry* were removed from CS. In another occasion, students complained about the difficulty of subject matter in the first semester, and accordingly a more practical course was shifted from semester 3 to semester 1, and a more theoretical course - from semester 1 to semester 3. Thus we see that the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used to improve the programme.

During the site visit, students reported that they evaluate the programme in online questionnaries in the Moodle environment. In this case the answers are not anonymous, thus there is a possibility that the student responses might be less informative or useful.

The alumni told that ŠU sent them several inquiries for information about their careers after graduation. The evaluation and improvement processes also involve stakeholders. Thus, according to opinion surveys, the expected "areas of activity of CS graduates in cultural and education institutions could be as follows: public relations, customer service, cultural education, organising and running events, development and implementation of cultural projects, public

communication of information, research into cultural processes, writing reviews for the media. Most emphasised areas were: organising and running cultural events and public relations." This result clearly shows that the labour market favours specialists in culture management rather than theorists of culture. This should be discussed by the programme staff.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Employ a full-time professor with strong specialization and publications in cultural studies to teach the core courses in theory and methodology.

2. To enable the achieving of the stated learning outcomes (to know contemporary methodological approaches) and in the view of the English as the basic language of international communication and scholarship, improve the teaching staff's English language skills.

3. Bring in guest lecturers from international cultural studies programmes.

4. Expand the teaching staff's connections to Cultural Studies scholarship, for example, by publishing reviews of foreign cultural studies books in national scholarly journals, and reviews of Lithuanian culture studies books published in international scholarly journals.

5. Submit scholarly articles in cultural studies for publication in Western journals.

6. Increase coherence of the staff, for instance, organize joint teaching events where the staff members can demonstrate their areas of specialization.

7. Increase the programme-specific library resources, as regards the most recent academic literature on cultural studies.

8. Discuss the possibility of admitting students every second year.

9. Investigate possibilities of student practice and job prospects in the private sector, and market the programme to those potential employers.

10. Investigate possibilities of student practice in other regional centres of Lithuania.

IV. SUMMARY

The programme aims and learning outcomes do not correspond to reality. They are too ambitious for the University at this moment. The staff is not a coherent team, as the teachers come from different backgrounds, and there is no clear full-time leader or leaders in the team with strong specialization and publications in cultural studies; the programme must have such a leader who would oversee the programme as a whole. Students' abilities may not allow the programme to reach all defined aims and outcomes. The programme may not be as demanding as it could be. Nevertheless, the overall level of Master's theses is acceptable.

The curriculum design meets legal requirements, but it is thematically inconsistent, as it represents a combination of three specialities: cultural studies, management of culture and museology. This may be confusing to potential employers.

Some teachers are conscious about putting the core authors of British cultural studies in their course syllabus; but generally the provided materials show that the majority do not try to ground their courses in the cultural studies tradition as it is broadly understood in the West. The lack of teaching staff mobility and poor knowledge of English seem to be the main obstacles for integration into the European research area; thus effort should be made to improve the teaching staff's English language skills. Guest lecturers from international cultural studies programmes should be invited to speak or teach at ŠU.

The premises for studies are adequate. The recently reconstructed library offers an inspiring work space. There is a good basic supply of library resources, but more current books in the programme-specific library resources would be welcome.

Instructors use a variety of methods. The programme balances instruction between culture studies theory on the one hand, and practical skills on the other hand. Students are provided with ample academic and social support, they can work while studying, but in this situation there is little that the university can do to help expand student mobility. The limited job opportunities in Šiauliai and North Lithuania suggest that staff should discuss the possibility of admitting students every second year. Staff should also investigate possibilities of student practice and job prospects in the private sector, as well as in other regional centres of Lithuania.

Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the programme's implementation are clearly allocated, but could be practiced more actively, for example, in analyzing low student evaluations. The outcomes of some internal and external evaluations are used to improve the programme. The opinion surveys of the stakeholders clearly show that the labour market expects specialists in management of culture, perhaps more than theorists of culture, and such a conclusion should receive a due consideration.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Culture studies* (state code – 621V91001) at Šiauliai University is given positive evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	2
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	2
	Total:	**14**

*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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Team leader:

Prof. dr. Juha Janhunen

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

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V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Šiaulių universiteto studijų programa *Kultūros studijos* (valstybinis kodas – 621V91001) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	2
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	2
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	Iš viso:	**14**

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

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

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

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

IV. SANTRAUKA

Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai neatitinka tikrovės. Šiuo metu jie yra pernelyg plataus užmojo, kad universitetas galėtų juos įgyvendinti. Dėstytojai nėra vieninga komanda, nes jų kvalifikacija yra skirtinga. Dėstytojų komandoje nėra aiškaus visu etatu dirbančio programos lyderio (lyderių), turinčio aiškią specializaciją ir mokslinių publikacijų kultūros studijų srityje, kuris galėtų vadovauti komandai; programai reikia vadovo, kuris prižiūrėtų visos programos vykdymą. Studentų gebėjimų gali nepakakti, kad būtų pasiekti visi numatyti programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai. Programa nėra pakankamai sudėtinga ir reikalaujanti pastangų, kokia galėtų būti. Tačiau studentų baigiamųjų magistro darbų kokybė yra pakankama.

Programos sandara atitinka teisinius reikalavimus, tačiau yra nenuosekli dėstomų temų atžvilgiu. Joje atsispindi trijų specializacijų derinys: kultūros studijos, kultūros vadyba ir muziejininkystė. Tai gali atrodyti painu būsimiems darbdaviams.

Kai kurie dėstytojai į studijų dalykų aprašus įtraukia pagrindinius britų kultūros studijų autorius. Tačiau, sprendžiant iš pateiktos medžiagos, dauguma dėstytojų nėra linkę savo dėstomų dalykų grįsti tokia kultūros studijų tradicija, kuri įprasta Vakaruose. Menkas dėstytojų mobilumas ir prastos anglų kalbos žinios yra pagrindinė kliūtis, kuri neleidžia integruotis į Europos mokslinių tyrimų sritį. Todėl reikia dėti pastangas pagerinti dėstytojų anglų kalbos žinias. Reikėtų pasikviesti tarptautinių kultūros studijų programų dėstytojų kurie galėtų skaityti paskaitas Šiaulių universitete.

Studijų patalpos yra tinkamos. Neseniai atnaujintoje bibliotekoje sudaryta tinkama darbui aplinka. Biblioteka gerai aprūpinta baziniais ištekliais, tačiau reikėtų dar daugiau šiuolaikinės su programa susijusios literatūros.

Dėstytojai naudoja įvairius metodus. Programoje išlaikomas balansas tarp kultūros studijų teorijos ir praktinių įgūdžių ugdymo. Studentams teikiama įvairi akademinė ir socialinė pagalba. Studijuodami studentai gali dirbti, tačiau situacija nėra palanki universitetui plėsti studentų mobilumą. Dėl ribotų įsidarbinimo galimybių Šiauliuose ir Šiaurės Lietuvoje universiteto personalas turėtų apsvarstyti galimybę organizuoti studentų priėmimą kas antri metai. Taip pat reikėtų ieškoti galimybių, kad studentai galėtų atlikti praktiką ir įsidarbinti privačiame sektoriuje Šiauliuose ir kitų regionų centruose.

Atsakomybė už sprendimų priėmimą ir studijų programos vykdymo priežiūrą yra aiškiai apibrėžta. Tačiau atsakomybę reikėtų dar labiau padidinti, pavyzdžiui, analizuojant nepalankius studentų atsiliepimus. Vidinio ir išorinio vertinimo rezultatai turėtų būti naudojami programai tobulinti. Socialinių dalininkų nuomonių apklausa aiškiai rodo, kad darbo rinkai reikia kultūros vadybos specialistų labiau nei kultūros teoretikų. Ši išvada turėtų būti tinkamai apsvarstyta.

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Įdarbinti visu etatu dirbantį profesorių – kvalifikuotą kultūros studijų specialistą ir leidinių autorių, – kuris dėstytų pagrindinius teorijos ir metodologijos kursus.

2. Sudaryti galimybes pasiekti numatytus studijų rezultatus (žinoti šiuolaikinius metodologinius požiūrius) ir gerinti dėstytojų anglų kalbos žinias, atsižvelgiant į tai, kad anglų kalba yra pagrindinė tarptautinio bendravimo ir mokslo kalba.

3. Pasikviesti tarptautinių kultūros studijų programų dėstytojų.

4. Plėsti dėstytojų mokslinę veiklą kultūros studijų srityje, pavyzdžiui, publikuoti užsienio kultūros studijų knygų apžvalgas Lietuvos moksliniuose žurnaluose ir skelbti Lietuvos kultūros studijų knygų apžvalgas užsienio moksliniuose žurnaluose.

5. Pateikti kultūros studijų mokslinius straipsnius spausdinti vakarų šalių žurnalams.

6. Sustiprinti dėstytojų bendradarbiavimą, pavyzdžiui, organizuoti bendrus renginius, kuriuose dėstytojai galėtų pristatyti savo specializavimosi sritis.

7. Didinti bibliotekos išteklius, susijusius su studijų programa, įsigyti naujausios akademinės kultūros studijų literatūros.

8. Aptarti galimybę organizuoti studentų priėmimą kas antri metai.

9. Ieškoti galimybių, kad studentai galėtų atlikti praktiką privačiame sektoriuje ir jame įsidarbinti, galimus darbdavius supažindinti su programa.

10. Ieškoti galimybių, kad studentai galėtų atlikti praktiką kitų Lietuvos regionų centruose.

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