



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Šiaulių universiteto
SPECIALIOSIOS PEDAGOGIKOS PROGRAMOS
(62407S112, 621X17002)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *SPECIAL EDUCATION* (62407S112, 621X17002)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Siauliai University

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Study programme	<i>Special Education</i>
State code	62407S112
Kind of studies	university studies
Studies cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (1,5), part-time (2)
Volume of the studies in credits	60
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in social sciences (education)
Date of registration of the study programme	2007-02-19

Additional data on the study programme

Beginning of implementation	1997-09-01
Language of implementation	Lithuanian
Peculiarities of conducting the study programme	
Institutions (countries) implementing the study programme	Šiauliai University (Lithuania)

*Special features of conducting the study programme are indicated

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1. Introduction

Master's study programme *Special Education (SE)* is delivered by the Faculty of Social Welfare and Disability Studies (hereinafter FSWDS) of Šiauliai University. There are 4 departments in the faculty: Special Education, Special Didactics, Social Education and Psychology, Basics of Medicine, also Study Quality Centre, Special Education Research Centre, Public Health Research Centre, Student Representatives' Office. In the faculty 5 professors, 16 associate professors, 7 lecturers, 3 assistants work in full-time position. At the moment 1212 students study in the faculty, 41 of them study master's programme *Special Education* (branch *Coordination of special education* – 32, branch *Speech therapy* – 9).

Study programme *Special Education* is supervised by the Department of Special Education. Obligatory and facultative (alternative) subjects are taught by the teachers of FSWDS and invited teachers. Study programme *Special Education* (branch *Coordination of special education*, branch *Speech therapy*) has the following study modes: full-time – duration 1,5 year, part-time – 2 years. The graduates of the study programme receive qualification degree of master in education.

According to this study programme special pedagogues have been trained since 1997.

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education of Lithuania was selected international expert team in compliance with the Description of expert selection, approved by Order No. 1-55 "On approval of the description of expert selection" of the Director of the Centre dated 19 March 2007 (Official Gazette, 2007, No. 35-1312; 2009, No. 97-4111) (hereinafter – the description of expert selection). International expert team was nominated for evaluating quality and efficiency of the Master's study programme *Special Education in Šiauliai*:

1. Prof. Ilze Ivanova (University of Latvia, Latvia)
2. Assoc. prof. Mare Leino (University of Tallinn, Estonia);
3. Ass. prof. Mirela Duranovic (University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina);
4. Prof. Em. Friedrich W. Seibel (The European Centre for Community Education, Germany);
5. Audronė Vareikytė (The Association of local Authorities in Lithuania, Lithuania).

In accordance with the evaluation procedure, the commission reviewed the self-evaluation report and the self-evaluation tables created by the Master's study programme *Special Education* (branch *Coordination of special education*, branch *Speech therapy*) in Šiauliai. On 11th November 2010 the commission carried out evaluation including meetings with staff responsible for preparation of self-evaluation report, teaching staff,

students, graduates and employers and gained direct insight into its activities and work conditions.

Following insight and interviews, the Commission submits the following report.

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

1.1. Programme demand, purpose and aims

1.1.1. Uniqueness and rationale of the need for the programme

Study programme demand is based on the situation of the education system of Lithuania and the labour market demand for specialists providing special educational support for children having learning disabilities.

Changes in the education system of recent years, integration and inclusion processes conditioned that demand for special pedagogues who are able not only to provide special educational support for children having SEN, but also to be managers, coordinators and consulters of this activity in mainstream education institutions, able to work in a team with other education process participants (parents, other pedagogues, school administration, etc) has especially increased. Such important coordinator's competences may be obtained studying in special education branch of master studies *Coordination of special education*. In certain institutions, due to activity specifics it is requested from special pedagogues to have master's degree and specialization of coordination branch. Master studies of *Speech therapy* branch provide students with deeper specific abilities necessary for speech therapist's work not only in education but also in healthcare institutions; early rehabilitation services (ERS) and other institutions. Demand for the programme among applicant was explained including number of applicants.

Special education II cycle study programme is realized in Šiauliai and Vilnius universities and ŠU and VU *Special education* II cycle study programmes have both similarities and differences. Comparing the content of ŠU and VU study programmes *Special education* it is seen that subjects taught in ŠU study programme branches are more purpose-oriented, more specialized, related to the content of concrete branch, providing special competences necessary in the activity of speech therapist or special pedagogue coordinating the provision of special educational help.

Demand for the specialists in the labour market, demand for the programme among applicants and position of the programme among other study programme are relevant and therefore reasonable and appropriate.

1.1.2. Conformity of the programme purpose with the institutional, state and international directives

Study programme *Special education* harmonizes with the implementation of ŠU strategic goals. It is aimed to train specialists able to provide special education services meeting modern requirements, able to work under the conditions of changing social reality. The

purpose of SE study programme corresponds to ŠU mission – to create the conditions for a person to gain qualification degree corresponding to the level of culture, science and newest technologies.

According to the SAR and discussions during site visit, the study programme is constantly improved referring to the EU standards.

The programme purpose, the mission and the development strategy have to be more in the sense of the inclusive education, international directives and EU strategic development documents.

1.1.3. Relevance of the programme aims

Programme purpose is elaborated by partial aims of the programme that describe professional activity for which successful graduates should be prepared.

Aim of study programme *Special education* correspond to the requirements set for second studies cycle of university studies, 7 level of the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework

There is compliance of the aims with the type and the cycle of the studies. The professional activities that the graduates should be able to perform should be more concrete, with their clear clarification.

1.2. Learning outcomes of the programme

1.2.1. The comprehensibility and attainability of the learning outcomes

Learning outcomes correspond to programme aims to train specialists having general and special competences. Competences are described.

Level of study results is revealed in the outline of the Lithuanian National Qualification Framework through the criteria of activity independence, complexity, changeability. Learning outcomes of study programme *Special education* correspond to VII qualification level.

Complexity level of learning outcomes corresponds to the kind of second cycle of university studies, 7 level qualification requirements described in the European and national qualifications framework of education field (master) programmes.

Learning outcomes should be more in connection with the requirements for the qualification described in the European structure of qualifications.

1.2.2. Consistency of the learning outcomes

Learning outcomes makes up sum total of obligatory abilities, correspond and complement each other through the abilities formed in the studies of main specialty

(*Special education*) and specializations (*Speech therapy; Coordination of special education*).

Competences approving II studies cycle university education are formed. Specific abilities obligatory for special pedagogue's and speech therapist's professional activity are also developed.

Learning outcomes correspond to the competences formed in programme modules. Each learning outcome is formed by module combination.

Learning outcomes at a programme level supplement and don't duplicate one another. All learning outcomes of the programme level are sufficiently reflected in the learning outcomes of the subject level.

Validity of learning outcomes is constantly assessed with regard to the surveys of master students, graduates of master studies and other persons on study quality, labour market demands, etc. Master students participate in study quality assessments initiated by FSWDS Study Quality Centre.

Study programme, its learning outcomes, content of delivered modules are constantly renewed.

Expanded spaces for special pedagogues' activity and need for new competences in order to successfully realize professional aims and strive for career conditioned the development of the branch *coordination of special education* of special education study programme. Master studies are more oriented towards the preparedness to work as special pedagogues coordinators in various educational institutions: mainstream, special schools and education centres, pedagogical psychological services, etc.

For speech therapists it is important to create possibility to have better specialization in the area of early speech therapy support and providing speech therapy not only in educational but also in healthcare institutions.

Since 1997 study programme was corrected and the corrections were approved in FSWDS council for 6 times.

In 2009 much attention was paid to the correspondence of the competences formed in module studies to qualification (professional) and general (transferable) competences indicated in study programme descriptions.

Study programme considers learning outcomes for their appropriateness to the demands of the labour market and society (responding to cultural, social, economic, political, etc., needs).

2. Curriculum design

2.1. Programme structure

2.1.1. Sufficiency of the study volume

Master degree study programme *Special Education* is developed according to “Description of master study programmes” approved by LR MES Minister’s order (2005-07-22 No. ISAK-1551).

The proportions of contact and self-study hours meet the stated requirements. The proportion of contact hours and the organization of students’ self-study hours are regulated by LR MES Minister’s order and ŠU Study regulations.

Study programme structure and extent correspond to the requirements for second studies cycle programme determined in “Regulations for full-time study programmes” (2000) and “Description of general requirements for master study programmes” (2005).

There is compliance of the study volume with the requirements of legal acts.

Correspondence of study extent to learning outcomes.

Master study programme *Special education* (branches – speech therapy and coordination of special education) is formed to assure versatile competences of a person who gained master’s qualification degree. In the programme sufficient credit number of theoretical obligatory and alternative is foreseen.

General extent of study programme, extents of concrete subjects and their groups (including theoretical subjects, subjects meant for deepening knowledge and skills, practical placements, final works, students’ self-study and auditorium study) correspond to the requirements of legal acts regulating university master studies.

The volume of each study subject attains the learning outcomes.

Consistency of the study subjects

Every semester the studies of not more than 5 subjects are foreseen. Subjects are arranged so that the students could consistently deepen and expand theoretical knowledge of studied science area and practical skills, get ready for scientific research activity and successfully prepare master’s work.

These are the basic subjects important for the studies of special education (regardless of branch) field.

Second cycle studies are oriented towards academic activity and are meant to improve academic qualification, therefore, special attention is paid to subjects that form the competences of academic research work and researcher’s competences. Developing students’ ability to critically assess theoretical and practical innovations and skills of their application in practical activity.

Special education study programme consists of obligatory subjects and alternative subjects of specialty field.

The subjects set out in an appropriate order and designed to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved in a consistent order for Study programme: Special education (branch – coordination of special education).

It is written in the self-evaluation report that for speech therapists it is important to create possibility to have better specialization in the area of early speech therapy support and providing speech therapy not only in educational but also in healthcare institutions.

Suggestions:

For the improvement of the quality of studies of the Master's study programme *Special Education* (branch *Speech therapy*) there should be more subjects with aim to teach students about early speech therapy (Early identification and support for children who are in risk for dyslexia, Methods of early identification and support for different speech and language disorders).

In the module Communication disorders there is planed for students to be thought about different communication disorders. Competence for speech therapists have written in the self-evaluation report is - Knows the peculiarities of the organization of speech therapy work in education, healthcare and social security institutions. To achieve this competence it is important to be incorporated in the study programme separate modules with aims to teach students about motor speech disorders, aphasia and swallowing disorders.

One of competences planed for speech therapist is - knows and is able to apply the most modern theories and systems of the development of speech, language and communication. For achievement this competence it should be included module Speech acoustic.

Principles on how study subjects are attributed to compulsory or elective type are analysed. An assessment is made on possibilities available to students to choose study subjects freely.

Compliance of the contents of the studies with legal acts

Realizing the content of second cycle study programme it is oriented towards general aims of master studies indicated in the documents regulating studies and specific learning outcomes related to studied branch.

There are correlations of the programme contents with the regulation of the study field.

Comprehensiveness and rationality of programme content

Themes delivered in the subjects. The experts analyze the compliance of themes with learning outcomes (if the themes are sufficient to achieve learning outcomes). Also it is considered if subjects taught are up to date.

182.2. Forms and methods of classes – forms of classes (lectures, workshops, seminars, laboratory works, etc.) and methods (demonstration, discussion, work in teams, project work, etc.) are tested for their ability to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes and assessed as to whether the methods of classes fit to the forms of classes.

For study programme *Special Education* (branch *Movement correction*) there is compliance of themes with learning outcomes, the themes are sufficient to achieve learning outcomes. Subjects taught are up to date.

Forms and methods of classes have ability to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes and fit to the forms of classes.

Suggestions:

Study programme *Special Education* (branch *Speech therapy*)

As previously mentioned suggestion for improvement the quality of studies is that there should be more themes about early identification and support for children with different speech and language disorders.

For competence planned for speech therapists to be able to work in healthcare institutions it is suggested to be more themes about motor speech disorders, aphasia and swallowing disorders.

For competences planned for speech therapist to be able to apply the most modern theories and systems of the development of speech, language and communication it is recommended to be involved themes, as a part of subject Speech acoustic, about the most modern software for analysis of speech and voice (e.g. Multidimensional Voice Programme, Real Time Pitch etc.)

3. Staff

Rationality of the staff composition

In special education (branch *Coordination of special education*) programme 44% of the extent of subjects that are meant to deepen knowledge and skills are taught by professors.

In special education (branch *Speech therapy*) programme 25% of the extent of subjects that are meant to deepen knowledge and skills are taught by professors.

Teachers' qualification meets set requirements, is sufficient striving for programme aims.

Proportion of teachers' and students' numbers is regulated by ŠU Study regulations and accounting order of teachers' pedagogical work annually approved by the Senate. Teachers' and students' proportion in study forms and meets recommended average size in lectures (10–15 students) and seminars (5–10 students); this number is closer to minimal requirements.

Teacher usually supervises 2–5 master works. Such students' number is rational and allows teachers to qualitatively supervise students' final works. Students are given right to choose a supervisor.

The ratio of students and teachers working in the programme is suitable regarding different forms of classes, stage of studies and different type subjects. Ratio of students preparing graduation papers and their research supervisors is also rational.

In special education (branch *Coordination of special education*) programme there are only full-time teachers. In *Speech therapy* branch programme 2 invited teachers work having high qualification in the areas important for speech therapist training.

Ratio of full-time and visiting teachers –the requirements set out in legal acts regarding the number of full-time teachers are met.

Proportion of contact hours and hours of organizing students' self-study is regulated by LR MES Minister's order and ŠU Study regulations.

The teachers' workload is distributed in an optimal way in respect of the teaching needs, research and other activities.

Turnover of teachers

During recent 5 years the turnover of teachers of master study programme is not big: 2 full-time teachers retired, one new teacher, PhD in social sciences (education), started to work; 2 invited teachers changed. Although staff turnover was small it allowed updating the content of taught modules, teaching methods, approaching the content to innovative teaching practice because new teachers have big practical experience.

All required information according to staff turnover is analyzed.

Compliance of staff experience with the study programme

Teachers have sufficient experience of work with students. Three teachers have experience less than 10 years, 11–20 years – 5 teachers, 21–30 years – 3 teachers, over 30 years of experience – 7 teachers.

In 2005–2009 teachers working in Special education master's programme prepared and published 24 teaching aids, study teaching books and other publications related to study programme modules. Most of teachers prepared 1-2 methodical publications each.

Teaching experience of teachers is sufficiency. Teachers actively prepare the learning materials associated with the study programme.

Areas of teachers' academic activity are related to special education study programme. Teachers of Special Education Department investigate the issues of assessing and meeting special educational needs of participants of education process (pupils, parents, pedagogues, special pedagogues). Teachers of Special Didactics Department analyze the issues of teaching didactics of pupils having special needs. This research is related to special education practice of Lithuania.

Majority of teachers participate in applied research by the Ministry of Science and Education. Scientific research results influence changes in study programme or separate study modules.

Teachers' research activities are in correlations with the study programme. Quality and impact of upon the study programme of those activities is described. Research activity of the programme teachers are assessed for its conformity with the subject taught.

Most teachers publish articles in native language and don't have published articles in journals included into international databases.

Suggestions:

More importance to be given publishing articles in journals included into international databases.

Teachers' experience of practical work.

Most of teachers working with master programme students have experience of practical work.

The teachers' professional experience is sufficient to ensure quality of the study programme.

Teachers' other activities (expert, organizational, etc.) extent and relations to study programme.

Two study programme teachers are experts of European Agency for development in special needs education. Many programme teachers performed expert activity in various projects and programmes. Quite many full-time study programme teachers actively participated in project activity. Most of the projects in which teachers participated or participate are related to various aspects of disability studies, children's and adults' special needs, search for better meeting of these needs, etc., and influence changes in aspirations and content of study programme and modules. Other projects are related to the improvement of university study process, application of innovative study methods, etc.

Most of full-time programme teachers having research degree are members of *Lithuanian Scientists' Union*. Quite many teachers are members and leaders of *Lithuanian Association of Disability Researchers*, *Lithuanian Speech Therapists' Association*, *Lithuanian Special Pedagogues' Association*. There are members of *Lithuanian Individual Psychology Association*.

Teachers working in this study programme have experience of participation in international organizations.

Most of programme teachers do not have sufficient experience of international collaboration in the area of science and studies, participation in international organizations. It is mostly limited by difficulties of communication in foreign (English) language of senior teachers. Sufficient level of international collaboration is characteristic to 5 full-time study programme teachers (out of 16).

Teachers' activity as researchers and educators is illustrated by their work in editorial boards of scientific journals.

As mentioned in the Self-evaluation report most of programme teachers do not have sufficient experience of international collaboration in the area of science and studies, participation in international organizations.

Suggestions:

Create a plan for improvement teacher's experience of international collaboration in the area of science and studies, participation in international organizations.

Professional development is regulated by qualification improvement provisions for ŠU employees (approved on 2008-03-19 in ŠU Senate meeting). Professional development takes place in various ways (traineeships, courses, full-time studies, international exchange, etc.). In qualification improvement teachers' participation in courses, seminars and other short-term events in Lithuania dominate, more rarely in foreign countries. Part of the teachers constantly participate and make presentations in international ATEE (Association for Teacher Education in Europe) conferences. Teachers participate in international exchange or improve their qualification in foreign universities.

Young teachers actively participate in international exchange programmes. Senior teachers improve their qualification preparing presentations for conferences and participating in them, preparing textbooks, dictionaries, manuals, teaching aids (it is equated to qualification improvement). Teachers who will retire after their tenure did not do qualification improvement training.

Topics of professional improvement are related to subjects taught and the areas of scientific interests.

As mentioned in the Self-evaluation report teachers' professional improvement is sufficient, although more oriented towards activities in Lithuania, and not sufficiently in foreign universities.

Suggestions:

Create a plan for improvement teachers' professional improvement in foreign universities.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Facilities

Sufficiency and availability of premises for studies

FSWDS premises (2 and 5 floors of ŠU building 1) and equipment are sufficient for qualitative implementation of study programme aims; study premises meet hygienic requirements, are available for all students (including students having motor disability).

Mobility is ensured by 3 lifts. Faculty premises are consistently renewed (repaired, technical demonstration equipment established), e.g., students' representatives' office is newly established, as well as faculty common-room, movement correction and physiotherapy hall, massage teaching and methodical room. In the faculty there are 16 premises suitable for study process: 7 auditoria, 7 rooms and 2 computer rooms. Total area of study premises is 909 m². There are 597 sitting places. One sitting place is 1,5 m². Comparing to total number of full-time and part-time students one place is meant for 1,9 student, while for one student 0,8 m² area is meant. Majority of study premises are provided with computer and visual equipment (multimedia), 3 rooms – sound equipment. In the faculty there are 3 mobile sets of TV and video equipment.

FSWDS students and teachers use university library catalogues, reading rooms, databases. Total area of library premises is 6000 m². Library is new and modern, meeting modern requirements. Number of workplaces (including 170 computerized workplaces) is 450.

The available premises and equipment are sufficient and appropriate, and meets hygiene requirements.

Suitability and sufficiency of equipment for studies

In the faculty there are over 80 stationary computers, 13 printers, 9 copiers, 12 multimedia projectors, in Room 519 stationary sound equipment is established. Faculty lacks computer classroom where students could use internet anytime.

To realize special education study programmes no special or specific laboratory equipment is needed. There is suitable and sufficient equipment.

Availability and accessibility of resources for practical placements

Reflective practical placement and the way of its realization correspond to study programme requirements, its aims and aspirations. Students analyze their work, reflect, point out what they intend to change in the nearest future.

The activities of institutions wherein students undergo practical training conform to the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Students are provided with the conditions to undergo practical training enabling them to achieve the aims of practical training.

Learning resources

Availability and accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications

The number of printed one-off and periodical publications is sufficient, they correspond to study programme aims. Students and teachers may use publications in ŠU library, reading room, or order and take them out. Certain methodical publications may be obtained in ŠU bookshop. Methodical resources are available on internet databases subscribed by ŠU library (e.g. EBSCO, etc.); teachers and students have free access from internal intranet computers.

Study programme is provided with literature on main subject studies, teaching books, textbooks, methodical publications.

Students and teachers may connect to the subscribed electronic databases in faculty computer classrooms, departments, library, hostels, etc.

The number of publications (textbooks, research magazines, etc.) is sufficient, and appropriate for attaining the aims and learning outcomes. Availability of the materials for students and teachers is sufficient. Review of publications prepared by teachers of the study programme is analyzed, and the possibilities for students to use them.

Study programme is provided with literature on main subject studies, teaching books, textbooks, methodical publications. The number of available books, textbooks and other publications is sufficient. The list of printed periodic publications is analysed. Different publications are available, important for study programme, mostly prepared by faculty teachers.

Students and teachers may connect to the subscribed electronic databases in faculty computer classrooms, departments, library, hostels, etc. Students and teachers are ensured access to databases.

Suitability and accessibility of learning materials

The number of methodical publications is sufficient, they correspond to study aims. In publications issues of education methodology, management, issues of coordination of special education, aspects of diverse speech therapist's activity are described, etc.

Students may use methodical publications in reading room, take from library, use methodical publications stored in a department or archive. Students may use reading room funds, make copies, buy at a bookshop of university publishing office. Some teachers use faculty ftp possibilities or e-teaching website: <http://www.spf.su.lt/mokymas>.

Students are given handouts of lecture material or electronic access is indicated.

The learning publications prepared by the programme teachers are used for implementing the programme.

The environment (e.g. intranet, library, reading room, etc.) where the learning publications are available, ensure access to such publications.

The available methodological aids used in the study programme are modern, and they are sufficient for achieving aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

5. Study process and student assessment

Rationality of the requirements for admission to the studies

In the self evaluation report there is information about the contest scores and character of special requirements.

The evaluation of the first stage and continuous studies include a discussion of the impact of the requirements for general admission to higher education institutions upon the selection of eligible students to study in the programme.

Special requirements for admission ensure that the study programme is taken by the students properly prepared for the studies.

The efficiency of the enhancement the motivation of applicants and new students

It is started to provide information about master study programmes already during bachelor study lectures, meetings with students and information about study programme is presented in FSWDS website.

During students' practical scientific conferences students receive information about further possibilities of master studies. During the defence of bachelor's works the possibilities of master studies are discussed with students. In disseminating information it

is collaborated with MES Special education and psychology centre and the Lithuanian associations of speech therapists and special pedagogues.

Choice of students of master study programme to continue studies is based on their wish to improve their professional special pedagogue's qualification or deepen researcher's competences necessary for further doctoral studies. Students' motivation for learning is encouraged by applied study methods and forms allowing students not only to actively study but also obtain transferable competences. Students' involvement to scientific research activity helps to strengthen motivation.

In the self evaluation report, different actions of a higher education institution in attracting students capable to study are explained and they are appropriate for attaining this objective.

There are different ways of seeking of higher education institution to ensure that the admitted students purposefully start studies and plan a successful completion by achieving good results.

Rationality of the programme schedule

Study schedules are arranged with regard to the requirements approved in ŠU Senate meeting (2008-04-16, report No. 23) and complemented in ŠU Senate meeting 2010-01-20 (report No. 4).

In the self evaluation report there is enough information about how classes and students' workload are distributed during a week and semester and it is adequately prepared.

Examination session timetables are made with regard to the requirements of ŠU study regulations, teachers' and students' requests are published at least 2 weeks before the beginning of session.

Examinations are distributed equally in all session period; students' load during session is adequate.

Student academic performance

In the self evaluation report, it is explained how a higher education institution monitors the student progress and drop-out rate and responds to the reasons of academic failure among students. There is the statistical data about changes in students number, the analysis of the reasons, the relation of the drop-out rate with the form, and the year of the studies. The drop-out rate is acceptable.

Students develop the abilities of literary analysis, preparation of research instruments, research organization, data collection and analysis. Students' involvement into scientific activity is encouraged. Students' participation in study process assessment, research of the effectiveness of study programmes, need for specialists is also encouraged.

Mobility of teachers and students

Most often international visits take place according to the agreements of LLP/ Erasmus and other international projects (Mundus, Grundtvig, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci etc.) signed by the universities.

As mentioned in the Self-evaluation report most of teachers cannot participate in this activity because of limited foreign languages.

Suggestions:

Create a plan for improvement of mobility of teachers and their knowledge of foreign language.

In the self-evaluation report there is explanation why students do not participate in exchange programme.

Suggestions:

Create a plan for improvement student's participation in exchange programme can be improved.

Student support

Efficiency of academic support

To present the programme "Open Door Days" are organized, where special pedagogues and teachers having bachelor's qualification degree are invited.

For the second year in the faculty the national contest "I Can – You Also Can" takes place, where pupils and teachers from various schools come. Teachers are given information collection about special education master programme.

Future master students may receive detailed information from vice-dean responsible for master study programmes and methodologists about study programmes, conditions, admission procedure, etc. Information on students' request is provided by study programme curator or head of the department and teachers. Information is also provided by telephone or email. Main sources of information – faculty website that is updated at least once a week; SQC website.

At the beginning of every semester the schedule of teachers' individual and group consultations is made and published in the faculty website and note-boards.

Students are given information about new professional possibilities and possibilities to continue studies for PhD.

Master programme students have possibility to study according to individual study plan and programme. Because master's study schedule is quite flexible and convenient to combine studies and work (studies take place on Fridays and Saturdays) there is no need to study according to individual plan and master students do not use this possibility.

Efficiency of academic support is explained through information about dissemination of information about programme and its changes; Student counselling on study issues; Student counselling on career possibilities; Possibilities of studying according to individual programme. Students' possibilities to restudy subjects and retake examinations are described in ŠU Study regulations in detail.

Efficiency of social support is explained through information about scholarships and financial support..

There is enough academic and social support.

Suitability of assessment criteria and their publicity

Assessment system is regulated by LR MES Minister's order, *Recommendations to improve assessment system* prepared by LR MES and ŠU Study regulations.

The assessment criteria enable a proper assessment of achieving learning outcomes. The correlations of assessment criteria with learning outcomes are characteristic of the entire study programme.

Cumulative assessment system is applied for the assessment of students' knowledge and abilities and it provides teachers with the possibilities to assess student's performance in a comprehensive and impartial way.

The student achievement assessment is presented to the students.

Feedback efficiency

Feedback about student's achievements to receive sufficient information, and their efficiency is suitable for students to get enough information about their achievements.

In the self evaluation report, there is analysis of the measures taken by the institution to ensure the students react to the feedback provided to them and these measures ensure that the students properly respond to the feedback while continuing their studies.

Efficiency of final thesis assessment

Requirements for final works and assessment criteria are presented in a methodical book prepared for students.

Requirements for final thesis are suitable of the requirements (their thoroughness, comprehensibility to students, and compliance to recommended research methodologies and methods with the study field).

Procedure of final thesis assessment is discussed by analysing the composition of the committee for assessing graduation papers and the procedure of appointing final thesis reviewers. The criteria for final thesis assessment are adequate in terms of impartial assessment of students' performance.

The grades for final thesis correspond to the level of quality of final thesis. The topics of final thesis are reviewed for their compliance with learning outcomes.

Functionality of the system for assessment and recognition of achievements acquired in non-formal or self-education

Achievements obtained informally and by self-education are assessed by covering a part of practical placement or a part of study module (cumulative assessment).

In the self evaluation report, there is no information about the number of students who have used the possibilities provided by a system of non formal or self-education, how students are informed and consulted at the higher education institution about the possibilities of such assessment and recognition while assessing the procedure for taking decisions on assessment and recognition, the ratio of students who took part in assessment.

Expediency of graduate placement

Percent rate of graduates working according to specialty is quite high: in 2005 – 86%, in 2006 – 80%, in 2007 – 92%, in 2008 – 100%, in 2009 – 92%.

Number of employed graduates and reasons of failure to get a placement are reviewed by analysing the percentage of graduates of the study programme who got a job and reasons for failing to get a placement.

Correlations of graduate professional activity with the study programme are reviewed by analysing the compliance of the nature of graduates' professional activities with the purpose of the study programme.

6. Programme management

Programme administration

Efficiency of the programme management activities

Different stakeholders are involved in the programme management. The qualification, teaching, scientific, managerial and other experience of the study programme coordinator is sufficient and correspondent to the field of the study programme.

Liability for the programme implementation and quality assurance is properly distributed among the management members. The programme management cooperates with other community members of the higher education institution in making decisions on programme implementation and quality assurance. The decision making and the quality assurance process are clearly described in the documents of the higher education institution.

Assessment parameters, methods and aids are compatible, particular methods and means meet the objective and object of assessment.

The information about aims, stages, areas, sub-areas, criteria, indicators, applied methods and means, evaluation results are ensured adequate publicity. Different groups of stakeholders are provided access to the information about evaluation relevant to them.

Efficiency of the programme quality improvement

The evaluation results are used in eliminating weaknesses and developing strengths in respective areas.

The study programme quality has improved by using the evaluation results.

Dissemination of the quality improvement results is reviewed in appropriate way. Different groups of stakeholders are provided with access to the information about quality improvement relevant to them.

Efficiency of stakeholder participation

Students participate in study programme administration and in study quality assessments. Student involvement in the quality assurance actions is discussed. Students on their own initiative and encouraged by teachers perform study quality research.

Teachers who do not belong to study programme committee engage in study quality improvement and assessment activities.

Social partners are involved to study assessment and organization process arranging them possibilities to present lectures, deliver seminars, supervise practical placements, consult on and review final works, participate in study programme improvement.

External stakeholders affect the evaluation and improvement of the programme quality.

III. Recommendations:

On the basis of self-evaluation and information from tables as well as insight gained from the visit, the expert commission reports that Master's study programme *Special Education* in Šiauliai fulfils in a satisfactory manner the majority of standards and criteria in educational and scientific activity. Some recommendations for quality improvement are mentioned already in this report.

After analysis of information about teaching activity and study programmes, teachers' workload and space and staff capacity of the Master study programme *Special Education*, the commission recommends the following:

- 1. Content of study programme *Special Education* (branch *Speech therapy*) should be more in line with the learning outcomes and competences of speech therapists.**
- 2. Teachers should give more importance to publishing articles in journals included into international databases. The study programme *Special Education* should develop a strategy for the improvement teacher's activity in projects and expert activity. International cooperation achieved so far should be improved.**
- 3. More attention should be given to promotion more research, more thesis in speech therapy.**
- 4. More attention should be given to promotion of lectures in English language and using more modern technology according to specialization.**
- 5. There should be integration about special education and special didactics.**

We hope that the mentioned critical remarks and suggestions and final recommendation will aid Study programme *Special Education* in creating new development strategy and its efforts to achieve high level of quality of study programme and teaching staff.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Special education* (state code – 62407S112, 621X17002) Siauliai University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by fields of assessment.

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

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

2 (poor) - 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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