STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO

TARPTAUTINĖS KOMUNIKACIJOS PROGRAMOS (62609S104)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION (62609S104)
STUDY PROGRAMME
AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

Grupės vadovas:
Team Leader:

Prof. Steven Knowlton

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Dr. Baiba Holma

Prof. Peter Neijens

Prof. Hans Beentjes

Dainius Radzevičius

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

Vilnius
2010

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	*Tarptautinė komunikacija*
Valstybinis kodas	62609S104 (naujas kodas - 621P95001)
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Tarptautinė komunikacija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (2), ištęstinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais[1]	80
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Tarptautinės komunikacijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

_____

[1] – vienas kreditas laikomas lygiu 40 studento darbo valandų

_____

INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	*International Communication*
State code	62609S104 (new code - 621P95001)
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	International Communication
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level of studies	Master
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2 years), Part-time (2 years)
Scope of the study programme in national credits	80
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of International Communication
Date of registration of the study programme	19-05-1997

© Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Our Experts Team (ET) was appointed by The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education to conduct an Evaluation of the study programme International Communication.

In conducting our evaluation of the Study programme, the Assessment Team has applied the methodological guidelines developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

The following analysis is based on the self-evaluation report from the International Communication (Code 62609S104) Programme, plus site visits and interviews with relevant stakeholders conducted in Vilnius on the campus of Vilnius University during the week of 28 November-3 December 2010.

Prior to the site visit by the team, staff from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education provided team members with electronic copies of the self-evaluation reports. In accordance with the suggestions made by CQAHE staff, at least two team members reviewed and commented upon the programme's SAR. In the case of this programme, as well as that of the other four communications faculty programmes the team evaluated during the same site visit, the two initial readers were selected based upon their especial professional expertise. The comments from these two initial readers were combined by the team leader into a combined preliminary report, which was circulated electronically to all members of the team. The preliminary report contained initial tentative assessments of the various aspects of programme quality, consistent with the methodological guidelines of evaluation, which were also distributed electronically to the team prior to the visit. The preliminary report also contained questions raised by the reading of the SAR and provided a valuable guideline for questions and queries for the entire team to put to the SAR preparation team and other stakeholders during the visit.

Team members found the schedule of meetings to be valuable and as efficiently scheduled as possible, to make maximum use of the limited time the team had to conduct is work. University administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders were invariably gracious and helpful in answering questions from team members. It is noteworthy that an excellent simultaneous translator was provided for those interviewees who were more comfortable communicating in Lithuanian.

In the case of this programme, and of the other programmes the team evaluated during the same site visit, it must be said that the ET had to cope with some serious problems. First, the programmes overall appear to be in a state of flux, with significant changes in place since the SARs were completed, rendering the information in the SARs must less useful than would have been the case otherwise. Second, the SARs did not address all criteria in the protocol, leaving team members with too little information as a base from which to begin. A related third problem was that the protocol asks for massive amounts of data, which tends to overwhelm, rather than enhance genuine programme evaluation. And fourth the team was asked to evaluate five programmes in only four days. Many of the meetings are largely set pieces and little truly substantive information can be gleaned. Overall, the committee of experts had to rely on their judgment to give priority to some criteria at the expense of others. The majority of the team have participated in other, similar evaluations in other countries. CQAHE and university personnel were certainly cooperative, but the task was simply too large for the team to be as confident as it would like to be in some details of the assessment. That said, ET is wholly convinced that the overall conclusions as to recommendation for re-accreditation are honest, accurate and fair to all concerned.

At the end of the first day of the site visit, the team asked university staff for considerable additional statistical information concerning student-staff ratios, student graduation and dropout rates and so on for this and for the other programmes. The team would especially like to thank and commend Vice Dean Doc. Dr. Renata Matkeviciene for gathering and producing highly useful tabular data on less than 72 hours' notice.

Due to time constraints and language issues, the team did not attend any classes, but team members were given wide-ranging access to the university, its operations and its facilities.

In conducting their evaluation of the study programme, the ET have applied the methodological guidelines developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education to implement provisions of the Order No. ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister of Education and Science "On the approval of the description of the procedure for the external assessment and accreditation of study programmes" (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 96-4083), following the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 54-2140).

The team would like to thank the staff of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and, in particular, to the Deputy Director of the Centre, to the Head of the Division for Studies Assessment, and to Evaluation Coordinator Rasa Penkauskienė for the support given before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Faculty of Communication for the manner in which we were made welcome and for the manner in which our queries and our exploration of various key issues were addressed in a professional and positive way.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

This programme is part of the offer of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University. The programme was founded in 1996 as part of the Phare TEMPUS Project Education for International Communication in Lithuania. International Communication was developed in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and The University of Leicester (Great Britain) and was evaluated as 'excellent' by the European Union. The program was restructured in 2008 to respond to new developments in the policy of the Lithuanian government that aims for a strong foothold in the Western cultural and economic space, and changes in the Lithuanian and the international market.

The International Communication master study programme from the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius was chosen as the basis for the development of a common master study programme in the European Masters for Professional Communication project that was launched in cooperation with five foreign universities, Leeds University (England), Hanze University Groningen (the Netherlands), the IULM University (Italy), and the New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria), Budapest Business School (Hungary). The Project received financing within the Life-Long Learning Programme in 2008 (Agreement No 2008-3235/001-001; Project No 142753-LLP-1-2008-1-NL-ERASMUS-ECDPS).

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

It is expected that with the growing importance of the services and public administration sector in Lithuania, the demand for and labor market of information and communication graduates in Lithuania is to grow (see The Study of the Competencies of Graduates of Master's Studies and the Needs of the Lithuanian Economy (2006). The International Communication master study programme aims to meet this demand for master-level information and communication specialists in Lithuania. Focus of the program is the organization and its communication in an international and cross-cultural business context. The program trains students for jobs in marketing departments, communication departments, and public relations departments of international organizations.

The International Communication programme is the only study programme of this type and level in Lithuania. The program has been developed after extensive consultation with stakeholders such as students and social partners. The programme enjoys increasingly high interest of prospective students: in 2008, the general enrolment competition was 3.33, and in 2009, it reached 4.29, which is one of the highest enrolment competitions for master study programmes in Vilnius University.

The SAR stated (page 7) that the employment level of graduates is high. This was confirmed in our discussions with alumni and employers. The ET does not have official figures that support these claims.

The ET endorses the rationale for the programme.

Given the focus of the program on "the organization and its communication in an international and cross-cultural business context", the ET suggests changing the label "International Communication" into "International Corporate Communications" which better reflects the profile of the programme.

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

The SAR gives a detailed description of programme aims, learning outcomes and subjects. This gives a clear and sufficient background to the programme.

The program aims to respond to new developments in the policy of the Lithuanian government that aims for a strong foothold in the Western cultural and economic space, and changes in the Lithuanian and the international market.

International communication is defined as an instrument of dissemination of information and knowledge for understanding the influence of national identity, mass media, foreign policy, business, and world outlooks, to analyze and to use it while overcoming or considering problems of international cooperation (SAR, page 6).

According to the experts, the programme confirms the institutional, state and international directives.

1.1.3. Relevance of the programme aims

The programme aims at providing advanced theoretical knowledge in the field of information and communication from an international perspective, at developing communication professional skills and self-education capabilities, and by broadening the capabilities to conduct research.

The experts consider these aims as highly relevant; however the ET misses references to the so-called Dublin Descriptors.

The SAR states – and this was confirmed in our discussions with alumni and employers – that students who graduated from the programme have jobs in marketing departments, communication departments, and public relations departments of international organizations.

The ET did not see statistics that support these statements.

The experts have discussed the profile of this programme vis-à-vis the Communication Science programme. We could conclude that the programmes differ on two dimensions: (1) approach and (2) topic. The approach of the International Communication Programme can be characterizes as more applied than the one of the Communication Science programme which is more theoretical. Furthermore, the Communication Science programme aims to train students in theories and research of general communication science, while the International Communication Programme focuses on corporate communication in an international context, in particular. The experts believe that the profiles of the two programmes are sufficiently different and nicely complement each other. However, students in both programmes might benefit from each other's perspectives. Therefore, the ET recommends that the department examine closely the program offerings of the two programmes to see where a partial merger could be effected.

1.2. Learning outcomes of the programme

The programme aims at competences that include knowledge and understanding of theories, the ability to conduct research independently, and the development of analytical and management skills and tactics.

1.2.1. Comprehensibility and attainability of the learning outcomes

The programme has a clear structure. The learning outcomes of the subjects are listed on page 7 of the SAR and include knowledge of the most recent international and cross-cultural communication theories; the capability of critical evaluation of the most recent research in these areas as well as the application of the acquired theoretical knowledge; understanding of modern public communication theories and methods; ability to apply them in various organizations as well as in multi-cultural environments or international markets; ability to independently generate creative ideas, to use various methods of acquiring, accumulating, disseminating, and using information and knowledge; ability to independently conduct international and cross-cultural communication research; the ability to evaluate the results of research and to determine their reliability.

The students, alumni, and employers were positive about the learning outcomes. The experts consider these learning outcomes comprehensible and attainable.

1.2.2. Consistency of the learning outcomes

The ET is positive about the aims and the learning outcomes of the program, but misses a table that systematically connects the learning outcome to the programme aims. Based on the SAR and our discussions with the teachers during the site visit, the ET, however, has no indication that the learning outcomes are inconsistent.

The ET would have liked a table that systematically connects the learning outcome to the programme aims. Such a table helps to evaluate the consistency of a programme.

1.2.3. Transformation of the learning outcomes

The programme in its present form and the learning outcomes of the programme has been changed in 2008. This shows that the learning outcomes of the International Communication Programme have been reassessed and renewed. The experts learned that further programme changes are/were made on the basis of course evaluations. Discussion with teachers, students and alumni confirmed that the quality of the programme and the courses were assessed on a regular basis.

2. Curriculum design

2.1. Programme structure

2.1.1. Sufficiency of the study volume

The volume of the programme is 60 credits; each semester has 20 credits. According to the SAR, broadening subjects account for 35 percent, and the deepening ones account for 65 percent. The first semester contains theoretical subjects which are obligatory for all students. In the second semester students can select elective courses from a list. The third semester is for a student's internship and the final thesis. Five subjects are studied in the 1st semester, four in the 2nd semester, and two in the 3rd semester, including a scientific research internship and the final master thesis. The structure of the programme in terms of independent work, lectures and seminars is fine. The experts believe that the structure and the study volume is solid and in agreement with the requirements of legal acts and learning outcomes.

2.1.2. Consistency of the study subjects

The structure of the programme is as follows: 1st semester: attention for theory and skills in the field of corporate and cross-cultural communication; 2nd semester: attention for important aspects of communication of an international organization; 3rd semester scientific research internship and final master thesis.

The teaching methods in the courses are related to the content and aims of the subjects (see SAR page 10). The ET concludes that the program content and teaching methods are well thought-out and highly consistent.

2.2. Programme content

2.2.1. Compliance of the contents of the studies with legal acts

The programme content follows the requirements of legal acts. The hours in the study programme for independent work correspond to the recommended standards (approximately 600 hours per semester).

2.2.2. Comprehensiveness and rationality of programme content

Page 8 of the SAR lists the competences to be acquired in the programme. These are directly related to the learning outcomes of the programme. In other words, the study programme is designed in such a manner that the subjects and the learning outcomes match. Topics include crisis communication, social responsibility, international communication campaigns, international relations, and sustainable development.

The experts like the connection between the scientific internship and final thesis that is planned in the programme. In the opinion of the experts, the tentative ideas with respect to the obligatory internship for students and the relationship with the final thesis have not yet been crystallized. The ET recommends doing so.

The experts believe that the reading lists of the courses show that the programme starts pretty much from scratch and does not seem to build on a bachelor programme in communication. This might be due to the heterogeneous intake of students. The EAT suggests to make an explicit choice for either a program content that builds on a bachelor in communication science, or a program content that does not require this prior knowledge. If the Faculty decides for the first option, it might be a suggestion to offer a prepatory (conversion) programme for students who do not possess this prior knowledge before entering the master's programme.

The ET has noticed that the teaching methods are related to the content and aims of the subjects (see SAR page 10). Theories are presented in the context of their practical application during contact hours.

3. Staff

3.1. Staff composition and turnover

3.1.1. Rationality of the staff composition

According to the SAR, the composition of the staff is adequate in terms of academic degree and specialization area. 90% of the programme is taught by teachers affiliated with the University. The team of teachers consists of 4 Professors, 5 Associate Professors, 3 Doctors of Sciences (working with a professor or associate professor), and 1 Invited Teacher who has 20 years of professional practice experience. 20% of the subjects of the study programme are taught by Professors.

There were no complaints about the workload, although the discussion partners in the site visit agreed that they made many more hours than the official working hours. The staff/student-ratio in the Faculty of Communication is 1:14 (if all teachers are count) and 1:20 (if only the full time teachers are counted) (see "Information regarding provided questions").

The ET suggests exploring the desirability of reducing the teaching load through reducing the number of contact hours.

3.1.2. Turnover of teachers

The experts consider this aspect satisfactory: the turnover of the teachers' team changed insignificantly since the renewal of the programme in 2008. On the other hand, it was mentioned to the committee during the site-visit that is was not always possible to find qualified teachers for the programme.

3.2. Staff competence

3.2.1. Compliance of staff experience with the study programme

The teachers in the International communication master study programme are active researchers and take an active part in projects financed by the European Union as project participants and coordinators. The scientific output of the staff is published in peer reviewed scientific journals. Staff members act as consultants for political, business, governmental, and municipal institutions. Although the ET did not receive detailed information per staff member, the experts, however, are convinced of the quality of the staff.

3.2.2. Consistency of teachers' professional development

The teachers working in the study programme improve their practical qualification by conducting scientific research as well as by participating in international and national scientific conferences and seminars.

The SAR also states that the teachers' qualifications are improved in relevant improvement courses and seminars organized by Vilnius University. The experts, however, are not convinced that this aspect is sufficiently developed. Although the University offers professional development courses, these are not for free anymore, and there was no proof that the teachers made use of this offer. Another aspect that the experts missed was the individual annual interview between teacher and management. These interviews would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the developments and performance in the past year, the plans for the coming year, and how to remedy experienced problems.

Based on the discussions with the management, the students, the alumni, the employers and the staff, the ET concludes that the staff is working very hard and has great responsibility towards the students. They are very committed to the programme and its content and the students and they have good contacts with the employers.

4. Facilities and learning resources

4.1. Facilities

4.1.1. Sufficiency and suitability of premises for studies

All auditoriums, laboratories and classrooms are located in Saulėtekio ave. There are 17 auditoriums with in sum 780 spaces. According to the SAR, there is a lack of work spaces for student group work and discussions.

At the same location, the Saulėtekis Information Centre (SIC), established in 2004, provides students and staff from the Faculties of Economy, Communication, and Law with the necessary scientific literature and satisfies their information needs. There is a reading room with 80 workplaces, 19 workplaces where laptops may be plugged in, and 23 computers with Internet connection.

The ET is positive about the facilities.

4.1.2. Suitability and sufficiency of equipment for studies

Auditoriums are well equipped with furniture. 10 classrooms are equipped with stationary multimedia (they are fitted with internet connection). Most of the classrooms of the faculty are equipped with most modern facilities. The E-learning and Examination Centre provides support

for developing electronic tests. In addition, there are rooms where students can take computer tests. There are over one hundred places for students taking tests at the same time.

The ET is positive about the equipment.

4.1.3. Suitability and accessibility of the resources for practical training

The programme includes an internship outside of the university.

4.2. Learning resources

4.2.1. Suitability and accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications

In the library, computers give access to relevant databases of refereed articles and books. There is a limited amount of relevant books available at the location. More books are available in the library in the centre of Vilnius. The collection of communication books is renewed and supplemented following suggestions of lecturers.

The ET is positive about the accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications.

4.2.2. Suitability and accessibility of learning materials

Teachers prepare a course description that is approved by the programme committee. The description is handed out to students during the first lecture. In addition teachers more and more use the electronic learning environment to present information and assignments. The E-learning and Examination Centre support teachers using the electronic learning environment.

The ET is positive about the accessibility of learning materials.

5. *Study process and student assessment*

5.1. Student admission

5.1.1. Rationality of requirements for admission to the studies

During the recent years (2008, 2009), the International communication master study programme enjoys increasingly high interest of prospective students: in 2008, the general enrolment competition was 3.33, and in 2009, it reached 4.29, which is one of the highest enrolment competitions for master study programmes in Vilnius University.

Applicants who graduated from other fields than communication have to take an admission examination. Despite this examination the group of students in the programme is according to teachers and students heterogeneous in terms of knowledge of research methods and communication theory. It is therefore concluded that the minimum requirements set for the programme are not sufficient. It may be rational to create a "preparatory" or "conversion program" for students from other faculties in order to raise their entrance level.

5.1.2. Efficiency of enhancing the motivation of applicants and new students

Information on the study programme is disseminated by the Committee of the Study Programme (it is in charge of the content of information materials), while the Administration of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University is responsible for information on the International communication programme. Recently, the Faculty of Communication has been taking an active part in various events, which were designated for the presentation of the study programme (open-day events, education fairs). Last year, information posters, which were distributed in all Lithuanian universities, started to be used for disseminating information on the study programme. In the future, it is planned to supplement the list of information dissemination measures by public lectures on the topic of international communication. This measure is expected to expand awareness of and to promote interest in this study programme.

The ET is positive about the efficiency of these efforts.

The numbers of freshmen are as follows: 24 full time and 41 part time in 2008 and 24 full-time and 25 part-time in 2009.

5.2. Study process

5.2.1. Rationality of the programme schedule

Training and learning at Vilnius University is organized in semesters. The calendar duration of a semester is 20 weeks including 4 weeks for examination sessions. The study programme is composed in such a manner that the subjects and their learning outcomes match and provide targeted competences as well as conditions to get prepared for scientific research work: 5 subjects are studied in the 1st semester, 4 are studied in the 2nd semester, and 2 subjects are studied in the 3rd semester including the scientific research internship and the final master thesis. The independent work hours of students are calculated pursuant to the provisions of the Regulation for Study Programmes of Vilnius University (Minutes No. SK-2006-11 dated 22 June 2006), while various forms of independent work, with regard to the Provisions of Studies of Vilnius University, are applied: literature studying, reviews, abstracting, scientific essays, projects etc. In order to encourage independent work, subject components indicate the learning and scientific literature available in Lithuanian libraries or freely accessible on the internet. Independent work of students is encouraged by integrating the evaluation of its results in the final evaluation of subject knowledge and capabilities.

The effective Provisions of Studies of Vilnius University envisage for students possibilities to study in accordance with an individual study plan. Besides, the Provisions of Studies envisage possibilities for students to retake examinations during 'the debt week', which lasts the first two starting weeks of the following semester. Such Provisions of Studies provide students with an opportunity to eliminate academic failures without suspending their studies and to continue their studies.

The schedule takes into account students' requests to schedule lectures for afternoon hours, which would allow students to combine studies and employment.

The ET concludes from the meetings with the students and the graduates that the programme is flexible. It accommodates the needs and wishes of (working) students to quite a large extend. The students in the site visit meeting were satisfied with this.

5.2.2. Student academic performance

The number of students in the International Communication programme developed from 64 (1-9-2008) to 108 (1-9-2010) and 66 (1-1-2010). The numbers of freshmen were 66 (2008m), 48 (2009m) and 23 (2010m). The number of graduates increased from 38 in 2008 to 53 in 2010, whereas the number of students that quit the program (dropouts) decreased from 27 (2007m-2008m) to 21 (2009m-2010m). The dropout rate is higher in the group of part-time students than in the group of fulltime students. The main reason for dropout is the inability to combine studies and work. The ET suggest that in order to solve this problem, research work seminars could be organized, which could help students to mobilize themselves and complete their thesis.

The ET appreciate these data, but for a full evaluation of the programme would have preferred to see the following data for each cohort: the number of freshmen, the number of graduates, absolute and relative to the intake (after 1.5 years, 2 years, 2.5 years and so on), dropout, etc. The ET realizes that the new programme started in 2008 only.

The dropout rate is considerable and should be a concern to the administrative staff. During the site visit the administrative staff mentioned that drop-out numbers have decreased due to the economic crisis.

5.2.3. Mobility of teachers and students

The study process involves studies abroad or internship in foreign institutions with the aid of ERASMUS bilateral agreements between the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University and higher education institutions of foreign countries. Since the current iteration of the programme began in 2008, only one student has studied abroad. Serious budget limitations make it very difficult for the administration to increase this part of the programme.

Teachers do take part in international conferences.. Due to high teaching load and limited resources, outgoing international teacher mobility is severely limited. The programme relies on faculty from abroad to teach in the programme.

The ET suggest to explore ways to increase international mobility in the International Communication programme.

5.3. Student support

5.3.1. Usefulness of academic support

Students enrolled in the programme receive information on studies and consult teachers on the issues related to writing of term papers and final theses during the whole period of studies. The content of the curriculum, lists of electives, timetables of lectures, timetables of examination sessions, information on conferences, etc. are published on the website of the Faculty www.kf.vu.lt. In addition, students are allowed to consult teachers individually at office hours of the teacher.

"The Learning Instructions for Written Works" should help students to familiarize themselves with the requirements for written work. The ET evaluates this aspect as good.

5.3.2. Efficiency of social support

Social support for students is organized at the level of the University. The university provides dormitories, and scholarships. The students said in the interviews that they are satisfied with the social support offered by the university.

The ET concludes from the SAR and the site visit meetings with the students and graduates that the social support is good.

5.4. Student achievement assessment

5.4.1. Suitability of assessment criteria and their publicity

Student's achievements in all subjects of the degree programme are assessed in written or oral examinations. Students' knowledge is evaluated on the basis of the Results Evaluation Procedure of Vilnius University. The teachers are guided by the effective Studies Provisions of Vilnius University, which obligate the teacher of a subject to introduce to the students the programme of the subject, the work order during the semester, and the reporting requirements.

Examinations in writing may be multiple choice tests or essay questions on theory subjects, and written analyses of cases or problems. In addition some examinations are taken orally. During some examinations, students are allowed to use auxiliary material and documents. Dishonesty and copying are no problematic issues within this degree programme. Every teacher selects an evaluation system, which is introduced to the students at the introduction of the subject. In course evaluation questionnaires, students indicate that they find assessment procedures fair. Students who want to dispute their assessments may appeal to the Commission of Appellation of the Communication Faculty.

The ET finds that the assessment criteria are sufficiently suitable to the programme as it is delivered and that they are clearly published and made known to the students.

5.4.2. Feedback efficiency

According to the Study Process Regulation of Vilnius University, students are entitled to look into their assessments and teachers have to comment on the results of assessments. Students enrolled in the Master's Degree Programme in International Communication receive information on studies and consult teachers on the issues related to writing of term papers and final theses during the whole period of studies. The ET concludes that the feedback efficiency is good.

5.4.3. Efficiency of final thesis assessment

The Committee of Defense of Final Theses consists of teachers who teach in the study programme and representatives of the social area and social partners.

From 2007, Master's final theses are stored in the digital database of Vilnius University to provide access to the research, and to control possible plagiarism cases. Guidelines for written assignments are included in the publication "The Learning Instructions for Written Works". The ET finds this more than sufficient.

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

The SAR does not contain information on this topic. Students did not have complaints on this issue.

5.5. Graduates placement

5.5.1. Expediency of graduate placement

The first graduates of the new study programme will graduate in 2010. According to the SAR previous experiences show that graduates of the programme find jobs matching their study programme. Graduates of this study programme includes finance experts, public relations specialists, teachers of higher education institutions, administrators of institutions, project managers etc. This was confirmed in the interviews with graduates and employers.

The ET concludes from the SAR and the site visit meetings with graduates and employers that graduate placement are sufficient.

6. Programme management

6.1. Programme administration

6.1.1. Efficiency of the programme management activities

The quality of the study programme at the faculty is the responsibility of the committee of the particular study programme, the academic branch division of the Faculty of Communication supervising the programme, the Studies Committee of the Council of the Faculty, the Vice-Dean on Study Affairs of the Faculty, and the Council of the Faculty, who also take care of material conditions and ensure the study process. Amendments to the programme are considered and approved in the Department, considered by the Studies Commission of the Faculty, and approved by the Council. Internal quality evaluation of studies is performed with due consideration of the opinion of the teachers who are experts in the area, opinion of students, and discussions with employer.

6.2. Internal quality assurance

6.2.1. Suitability of the programme quality evaluation

In 2008, the Quality Management Centre was established at Vilnius University. Its main activity is development of quality assessment criteria and indexes, gathering and processing of information on studies quality, quality management, and control of quality implementation at Vilnius University. Currently the studies quality at VU is realized by discussing the study programmes at VU Studies Department, by considering and approving study programmes, self-assessment results at the VU Studies Commission and the Senate.

Students are also involved in the evaluation process of the study programme. The teacher of each subject gives anonymous questionnaires, in which students evaluate the subject's quality, teaching methods, etc. The results obtained are discussed at sittings of the Information and Communication Department and the committee of the programme takes them into consideration when evaluating and reviewing the programme. In the interviews during the site visit students

mentioned that they were not always motivated to fill in the evaluation questionnaires seriously. The ET evaluates this aspect as sufficient.

6.2.2. Efficiency of the programme quality improvement

After each subject, students fill in anonymous questionnaires, in which they evaluate the subject's quality, teaching methods, etc. At the end of each semester, the Administration of the Faculty of Communication also organizes students' opinion surveys. The obtained results are discussed in meetings of the Department of Information and Communication which supervises the programme; the results of opinion surveys are provided to the Committee of the Study Programme, which takes them into consideration when evaluating and revising the programme.
In the interviews during the site visit students mentioned that they were not always motivated to fill in the evaluation questionnaires seriously.

Students, graduates and employers are in general positive about the programme. Most of employers emphasize the possibilities to apply the theoretical and practical knowledge provided by the University in the practical activities of a specific organization; both graduates and students give a sufficiently high assessment to the study programme, the benefit of the subjects of the study programme for professional activities, and knowledge and capabilities provided; both students and graduates emphasize the qualification of the teachers working in this study programme; both students and graduates give a sufficiently high assessment to the influence of scientific activities of the teachers on the teaching process and the teachers' qualifications.

6.2.3. Efficiency of stakeholder participation

Graduates and other people working in the applied sector serve as guest lectures, and share their experience. Graduates often are active supporters of event organization or ensuring of the study process (lecture reading, formulation of topics of scientific researches, organization of practical trainings). However, relationships with graduates and employers are limited. During the interviews, employers and graduates expressed their willingness to be involved in the programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The ET suggests changing the label "International Communication" into "International Corporate Communications" which better reflects the profile of the programme.

3.2 The Experts team recommends that the department examine closely the program offerings of the M.A. in International Communications and the M.A. in Communication Science to see where a partial merger could be effected. This would provide pedagogical advantages in that it would provide theoretical grounding to an essentially practice-based professional course, and would, similarly, provide an understanding of real-world applications for a theoretical course which, however much it is designed to lead to doctoral work, has as its core how mediated communication allows, and occasionally impedes, human interaction in a wide variety of contexts.

3.3 The Experts team understands the financial restrictions, but still recommends that the M.A. in International Communication explore ways to get its students abroad for at least a month or two during their studies. The programme, which is essentially a study of corporate communications, has an international focus and appropriately enough given the population and economic environment of Lithuania. Time in another country almost invariably leads to a positive outcome for the student and such an experience seems particularly relevant to students in an international program such as this one. The team urge the administration to explore ways to increase the international component of this course of study in as many ways as possible.

3.4 The ET suggests describing the programme aims in terms of the so-called Dublin Descriptors.

3.5 The ET suggests to systematically connecting the learning outcome to the programme aims. Such a table helps to evaluate the consistency of a programme.

3.6 The ET recommend to systematically collect standardized data on the productivity of the program: the number of graduates and dropouts, absolute and relative to the intake (after 1.5 years, 2 years, 2.5 years and so on). These data are important indicators of the so-called productivity of a programme.

3.7 The dropout rate is considerable and should be a concern to the administrative staff.

3.8 The ET recommends detailing the tentative ideas with respect to the obligatory internship for students and the relationship with the final thesis.

3.9 The evaluation team recommends that the programme create a Board of Visitors to serve as external advisors to the programme. The board would be made up of professionals in the field who would, on perhaps an annual basis, come to the campus and offer advice on curricular and other academic matters, helping the programme to better relations with an important source of information about changing needs in the professional environment in which program alumnae will seek employment. Further, such a board would be a ready supply of one-off guest lecturers for classroom instruction. Such lectures are almost always very attractive to students and provide an important link to the professional communications world outside the campus. Several of the employers the team spoke to expressed willingness – eagerness, even – to join such a board.

Employers the team interviewed also expressed a willingness to provide internships to students in the programme.

3.10 The ET suggests exploring the desirability of reducing the teaching load through reducing the number of contact hours.

3.11 The team believes that serious attention needs to be paid to staff development. Some classroom instructors volunteered in interviews that the current procedure, which allows for teaching staff to take a course in staff development, is no longer free, as it once was, which a serious impediment is when teacher pay scales are already perilously low. There are resources free available online for university teaching staff development. The team believes that the university can improve the quality of classroom instruction by putting some attention – money would help, but is not utterly necessary – into this area.

3.12 The team recommends that in future evaluation processes, the team preparing the SAR also be tasked with a preliminary completion of the evaluation report. An enormous amount of team time is consumed in completing categories and sub-categories of a largely mechanical nature.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *International Communication* (state code – 62609S104 (new code - 621P95001)) 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.	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)	3
	Total:	**18**

*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.

Grupės vadovas:
Team Leader: Prof. Steven Knowlton

Grupės nariai: Dr. Baiba Holma
Team members: Prof. Peter Neijens

                        Prof. Hans Beentjes

                        Dainius Radzevičius