



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Aleksandro Stulginskio universiteto

**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS**

**KAIMO PLĖTROS ADMINISTRAVIMAS (621N70002)**

**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**OF ADMINISTRATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**(621N70002)**

**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Aleksandras Stulginskis University

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Studijų programos pavadinimas                        | <i>Kaimo plėtros administravimas</i> |
| Valstybinis kodas                                    | 621N70002                            |
| Studijų sritis                                       | Socialiniai mokslai                  |
| Studijų kryptis                                      | Viešasis administravimas             |
| Studijų programos rūšis                              | Universitetinės studijos             |
| Studijų pakopa                                       | antroji                              |
| Studijų forma (trukmė metais)                        | Nuolatinės (2) , iššęstinės (3)      |
| Studijų programos apimtis kreditais                  | 120                                  |
| Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija | Viešojo administravimo magistras     |
| Studijų programos įregistravimo data                 | 2002-06-14                           |

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## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Title of the study programme                        | <i>Rural development administration</i> |
| State code  | 621N70002                               |
| Study area  | Social Sciences                         |
| Study field   | Public administration                   |
| Type of the study programme                         | University studies                      |
| Study cycle   | second                                  |
| Study mode (length in years)                        | Full-time (2), Extended (3)             |
| Volume of the study programme in credits            | 120                                     |
| Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded | Master of Public administration         |
| Date of registration of the study programme         | 2002-06-14                              |

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC). The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

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

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited. The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points). The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points). The programme **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

### 1.2. General

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

| No. | Name of the document   |
|-----|--|
| 1   | List of the meeting with senior administration etc.                              |
| 2   | Student’s opinion about the study subject  |
| 3   | Scientific research areas and subareas   |
| 4   | Research fields of the Faculty of the Economics and Management                   |
| 5   | Motives to enter the university of first year part-time students (in Lithuanian) |
| 6   | Questionnaire of motives and hopes to enter ASU for first year students (in      |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Lithuanian)   |
| 7 | Study subject by the eyes of a student (in Lithuanian)                  |
| 8 | Questionnaire of study quality evaluation for graduates (in Lithuanian) |
| 9 | Guide to the Library Use  |

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

Aleksandras Stulginskis University (ASU) is a state higher education institution located in the rural area of Kaunas. It has an agricultural tradition since the beginning of the 1920's and was granted the status of University in 1996. ASU follows the University Statute and required Rules and Regulations of the University Council and Senate.

ASU is divided into five faculties; Agronomy, Economics and Management, Forest Science and Ecology, Agricultural Engineering, Water and Land Management and two centres; Cultural Communication and Education Center, and Mathematics, Physics and Information Technology Center. The number of students was 4636 at the end of 2015. The number of teachers at the same period was 269 and research workers were 33. The Rural Development Administration Programme is organized and managed by the Faculty of Economics and Management within the area of social sciences. Study field is defined as Public Administration.

University is described as unique compared to other Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions since it is the only programme, which combine focusing on the rural development administration and public administration. At the site visit, faculty describe their responsibility to develop human resources take action in this study programme. This programme is pointed out as important for preparing professionals for different positions to develop the rural area in Lithuania as well as international. University mission is ambitious and is presented in the Self Evaluation Report, (SER, p.5). Faculty is focusing on studies in social sciences and has a good reputation.

### ***1.4. The Review Team***

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 22/11/16.

1. **PhD. Maria Wolmesjö (Team leader)** *Faculty of Caring Science, Work Life and Social Welfare, University of Borås, Associated professor in Social Work, Sweden.*
2. **PhD. Benedikt Friedrich-Albert Konstantin Speer,** *Carinthian University of Applied Sciences, Program Director Public Management, Austria.*
3. **PhD. Leif Kaley,** *School of Governance, Law and Society, Study Area Politics and Governance, Study Area International Relations and Future Studies, Professor of state and citizenship theory, Tallinn University, Estonia.*
4. **PhD. dr. Regimantas Čiupaila,** *Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Associate professor, Lithuania.*
5. **Ms Augustė Dementavičienė,** *student of Vilnius University PhD in Political Science, Lithuania.*

## **II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

### **2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes**

Analysis of the self-evaluation-report, SER shows the programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible. The master study programme of Administration of Rural development is unique since “no other university associates learning outcomes of public administration study programmes with studies and/or professional activities of public administration and related study fields” (SER p. 5). At the same time there are similarities in context when comparing with programmes offered at other international universities in this field (SER, p.5). It is possible to continue studying for doctoral degree at ASU. Aims and learning outcomes are presented at the website and students know where they are available. The review team was provided with the required material and information both in English and in Lithuanian about the availability of the programme on the HEIs webpage.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market. Learning outcomes are annually revised and up-dated according to new academic achievements and changes in the labour market every 1-2 years (SER, p.6). Aim of programme is to prepare top-notch rural development administrators for scientific and practical work. “The purpose of the study programme is elaborated by and corresponds to aims of the programme” (SER, p.6). When comparing the programme aims and learning outcomes with the type and level of studies and the level of Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

qualifications offered they seem to fulfil what is required for national level. Since several key changes have been done 2010-2016 (SER, p.7) the name of the programme; Administration of Rural Development, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other.

Both the starting competences expected of the master students, and the activities needed for internationalisation, practical training and developing academic research competences seem to differ significantly among the student groups. These questions have implications for the general aims and learning outcomes of the programme. Some key examples.

During the meetings of the site visit it was visible that the starting competences were very diverse for the international students and in some cases much work was needed for obtaining a sufficient starting basis. For the Lithuanian student group one clear concern was related to internationalisation as they were mostly working locally and usually were not active in Erasmus exchange. The needs and possibilities for the relatively modernised Lithuanian rural areas are different from the home countries of international students where more basic development is often needed. The role of EU agricultural and regional policies is much different for the member states and the third countries where most of the international students are originating. The different starting needs, student groups and output environments should be more reflected in the aims and learning outcomes of the programme.

As a significant part of the credits for methodology and thesis development are in an elective module for students considering the PhD studies the panel team can not be sure the academic learning outcomes are in practice sufficiently achieved for all the graduates, a concern supported by the practical examination of the master theses. As the number of public administration core courses is low in the programme and even some of these are under electives the panel team cannot be sure the graduates have sufficient public administration related learning outcomes, a concern supported especially by the discussion with the international students.

Further consideration and enhancement is advisable with regard to whether, to which extent and in which aspects the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes correspond to the type and cycle of studies and the level of qualifications as well as the academic and/or professional requirements and also whether the title of the programme, intended learning outcomes, the content of the programme and the qualification to be obtained are well-tuned. It is

also doubtful that the content of the programme corresponds to the latest academic, artistic or technological achievements.

## ***2.2. Curriculum design***

The Administration of Rural Development study programme meets the legal requirements for MA studies according to the Self Evaluation Report (SER, Table 3, p. 7; Table 4, p. 9). The programme is delivered in a full-time version (2 years) in English and in a part-time version (3 years) in Lithuanian, which are basically identical but for the “spread of the study subjects within the curriculum design as well as total credits in individual semesters” (SER, p. 7). Therefore, there is no distinction between study plans or course descriptors for the different branches of the programme. The study subjects according to Annex 7 of the SER are evenly spread and not repetitive, but sometimes closely linked. In this case teachers communicate/cooperate with members of the Study Committee to ensure consistency and to adapt the course descriptors accordingly (SER, p. 8).

The Development Scheme of Logical Links (Annex 8) is, however, not easily understandable and should be clarified. The key concerns with regard to the aims and outcomes of the programme were already highlighted under the respective section and have implications for the curriculum design. It would be reasonable to better reflect the diversity of the student groups both in how a sufficient starting competence will be ensured (especially for international students), how the learning outcomes are achieved especially in case of internationalisation, practical training, thesis preparation and ensuring sufficient public administration competences.

Another layer of issues concerns how the general formal frame is filled with substance and practically implemented. The programme is primarily oriented towards rural socio-economical development and covers public administration courses only to an extent. Also the student groups are quite different. This makes the current profile of the programme stretched. While this needs not necessarily to be a deficiency a stretched programme needs very careful content design and management.

During the site visit, criticism was especially expressed regarding the teaching of research methods. Apparently, neither the course “Scientific Research Methodology” nor “Research Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras



Work 1” offers an all-encompassing overview of quantitative and qualitative methods necessary for the study field. Students remarked that colleagues who had not studied the BA Administration of Rural Development study programme therefore had problems regarding research methods. The panel team cannot be sure that the current curriculum design allows to achieve sufficient academic learning outcomes in case of all the master graduates. This concern is supported by the practical examination of the master theses during the site visit.

For an academic master programme, developing sufficient conceptual and methodological abilities and writing the master thesis is a major necessity. The panel team recommends that this aspect should be carefully elaborated both with regard to the skills and differences within the student groups.

Apart from the compulsory courses there are also electives. While the SER (p. 8) only lists two electives, the study plan in Annex 7 lists three of them: elective 1 (for practical work), elective 2 (for scientific work), and elective subject for direction of studies. Even during the site visit it was not thoroughly explained what this third elective really was about. It is notable, however, that in the third semester there is only one elective course for the electives 1 and 2 respectively, but 4 elective courses for the elective 3, which cover important subjects like Environmental Policy and Law, Rural Social Partnership, Management of Public Services and Management of Public Finance, which are of general interest for students studying Administration of Rural Development. Hence, it should be considered to integrate them at least partially in the compulsory part of the study programme and thus align the electives to one course each in the third semester. Apart from this critique, the content of the subjects is consistent with the type and level of the studies and reflects – after the changes conducted between 2010 and 2016 (SER, p. 7) – more or less the latest achievements in science, art and technologies.

The alignment of general learning outcomes (called “main” and secondary” objectives in the SER) with the learning outcomes at the level of the single courses (called “course objectives” in the SER) seems to be systematic and well developed. At the programme level they have to be consistent with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd partial objectives of the study programme (Annex 6) while at the course level they have to be complemented by the respective learning methods as well as by assessment criteria and methods of learning outcomes. Students know what is expected of them and how they will be assessed. The content and methods of the subjects are, therefore, appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, as defined in the course descriptors. Nevertheless, the students apparently focus mainly on learning methods and

assessment criteria, but had at least some understanding regarding the meaning and importance of learning outcomes.

The updating of the study descriptors is controlled by two reviewers of which one should be a practitioner or a member of the Study committee (as in the Bachelor programme). The adaptation to the – admittedly rather general - Descriptor of the Study Field of Public Administration, in force since 23 July 2015, could be clearer, e.g. by inserting a matrix of Study Field descriptors, general learning outcomes and single course descriptors.

### ***2.3. Teaching staff***

Evaluation of teaching staff according to SER and site visit shows the requirements according to the criteria above is met: According to the requirement (*Description of General Requirements for Master's Study Programmes*, Order No. V-826) at least 80 percent of all study subject teachers are required to have a scientific degree. The study programme is provided by: 16 teachers, 14 doctors of science, 5 professors and 7 associate professors as well as 2 lecturers holding a doctoral degree. In total 87,5 percent of programme teachers have a scientific degree. To organise study fields 2 lecturers not holding a doctoral degree are involved. The staff members are mainly from the Business and Rural Development Management Institute and the Institute of Economics, Accounting and Finances at ASU. According to SER, there is cooperation with other departments at ASU as Institute of Energy and Biotechnology Engineering and Centre of Cultural Communication and Educology. One associate professor from University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland is also taking part of the programme. The number of teaching staff is high, most of them are employed by ASU, work full time at the university and seem to live in the neighbourhood. In practice, there is variety in the teaching staff of the Lithuanian and English versions of the programme so the general data does not fully reflect the practical situation in the teaching of the real life versions of the programme.

There is a high academic level of the teaching staff. In 2015/2016, 87,5% of programme teachers had a scientific degree (SER p. 12). As much as 65% of the filed subjects are delivered by professors. The presented teaching staff qualifications are meeting the legal requirements. Teaching staff fulfil the required academic levels and some of the lectures are active in research. With these preconditions, it can be expected that students will receive supervision for writing high quality exam papers/thesis. Unfortunately, the general impression of the theses, which were

presented, were on a lower level, than expected but preconditions shows it is doable to develop their quality in a short period. The teaching staff turnover is described and explained in the SER (p.17). Share of professors have been extended and average age of professors have been reduced from 51.9 to 48.8 during the latest five year's period. This should ensure an adequate provision of the programme.

Teaching staff in general has a long experience from practical as well as educational work. They are combining giving lectures with doing scientific research and every fifth year an "attestation for the purpose of verification of compliance of qualifications" is conducted. The impression of the panel team is that the teaching staff members are active in writing articles and take part in international research, study projects, are members of the editorial boards of international scientific journals and take part in international scientific conferences. Programme teachers take part in exchange programmes to give lectures and have "maintain proactive ties with a large number of foreign higher education institutions (SER p15).

There are possibilities for academic staff for pedagogical skills development and scholarly exchange. Aleksandras Stulginskis University has a strategic academic partnership with the other Baltic universities developed from the earlier agrarian academies. On the basis of the site visit there seems to be space for considering the development of skills in research design and methods and how to better integrate the public administration related knowledge in addition to pedagogical aspects.

The conditions for a professional development of the teaching staff are good and lecturers are offered language courses in English to be able to teach the foreign students, which is encouraged by the faculty. The teaching staff of the programme is involved in research directly related to rural development and often seems to involve students in their own ongoing research. This is appreciated among students, who took part of the field visit to get these opportunities to develop their skills and work close to the professors. It would be useful to pay attention to having sufficient presence and motivation of the staff members who have research interests in public administration.

#### ***2.4. Facilities and learning resources***

Facilities and learning resources meet the criteria above. The Faculty offers 34 different facilities including ordinary classrooms, computer classrooms, specialized distance learning classroom, methodological study and specialized practical business training classroom. This makes the premises for studies adequate both in their size and quality. The number of students has been between 5 and 12 students each year. The total number of graduates was 58 from 2009 to 2015. Computer classrooms were fully upgraded and equipped in 2013-2014 and “17 software and special IT technologies programmes (one example is SPSS, other programmes are not specified in the SER) are used in the field of scientific research” (SER, p.18). Computer classrooms are used six to eight hours a day on average, including time for independent work of students. A majority of students own their personal computers, something, which can be expected to increase in the future. Since students have their own computers and are used to look for information at the Internet and are depending in English literature in the course, it is important that ASU can offer free access to Internet at the campus area and also access to e-journals and databases. The teaching and learning equipment (laboratory and computer equipment, consumables) is then adequate both in size and quality. Approximately 20% of the study subjects and lectures were delivered as distance study.

The Faculty provides more than 1500 workplaces for their student's (according to SER) and the arrangements for students' practice seem adequate. Students, as well as alumni and teachers in this organisation expressed there seems to be a good relation and collaboration with different companies in the neighbourhood.

Library is located in a building at the Campus area and teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases) are available. Computer workstations are available and students (and teachers) “have access to 11 000 e-books and 29 research journals in 19 international and Lithuanian subscription databases” (SER p.20). There is a lack of English written literature at the library. Most of the literature recommendations are on-line journals and e-books from the professors. Internet and a good access to different databases makes it possible to find teaching and learning material worldwide, which is important to gain information in foreign languages and a broader perspective on knowledge.

## ***2.5. Study process and student's performance assessment***

The admission requirements to the study for Lithuanian groups (full and part-time) programme under review are well-founded and designed on a national level. Detailed information about the programme and admission regulations is clearly stated on the University website. Students can be admitted to state-funded places or self-paid places. A number of activities, including university events, are held to attract applicants to the programme.

As the committee learned during the site visit there are several real life versions of the programme. The version in Lithuanian language is predominantly domestically oriented and most of the MA students are already practicing. The version in English language has a diverse international student pool and students are expected to move to Lithuania and study full time. While formally they can be considered one programme the actual needs, possibilities and risks of the real life versions seem to differ at least based on the discussions with the staff and students.

There were some challenges in organizing international student's admission. It is obvious that this study programme is ably presented internationally and is capable to get students worldwide. University reputation is very beneficial for getting international students. However, students come with very different background and knowledge. The specific rules and the contents of supplementary programmes/bridging courses are, however, not entirely clear, and could be made more transparent for all included actors: students, lectures and so on. And it could be appropriate to use these courses for those who are beginners in this study field.

To start with, it was surprising and confusing that in one (even in master level) programme experts found different types of students (full-time, part – time and international (only full-time, as Panel team understood)). It is obvious that study process could not be the same for all these different groups, but the stated learning outcomes are the same. It is questionable whether it is possible for all groups to reach these learning outcomes. During the meeting, there was more emphasize on international group, which takes more efforts for lectures and administration to manage and Lithuanian group was a little bit less covered.

Learning outcomes, which are very well stated in course descriptors and so on, should be more explicitly explained for students, alumni, social partners. Those who were seen by experts were aware of main goals and objectives of the programme, although their awareness about intended learning outcomes was vague.

Nevertheless, the organization of the study process is on good level. At the beginning of a semester each lecturer introduces students to the aims, study results and programme of a course, discusses studying methods and assignments, criteria for their evaluation, also recommends literature for self-study. Students are individually consulted by the staff of the programme. The thesis support for students is adequate, supervision is assured and professors take sufficient time to advice and counsel students.

During the visit group was familiarized with different types of surveys conducted to analyze quality of studies and other important issues. The one question raised when group tried to analyze some results, whether it is the best idea to do it only electronically in regard of not getting a lot of answers especially when the numbers of master students are not big.

University gives a lot of different possibilities to improve personal and professional skills. For example, students are encouraged to make presentations in the scientific-practical conference “Good Practice of Strengthening Competitiveness of Lithuanian Rural Areas” or to participate in Faculty level contest of writing. We found some more evidence that students and lectures have some joint research projects or articles. That is not a trend but there are some lectures who find time and enthusiasm to ask students to support them. These relationships should be seen as good examples and more encouraged from administration especially in master level. However, as mentioned above there is lack of some specific projects with more emphasizing public administration field and topics.

Students are encouraged to participate in research activities but master theses, which were shown during the meetings was not very strong especially in methodological aspects. There is a need to include more tasks to encourage the development of research skills among students. Also, many final theses contain relatively few references in English. Students do not draw upon sufficient international articles, books and journals in English or other relevant languages. That could be related to overall lack of English knowledge in Lithuanian groups (more about this issue in part about mobility programmes). Although many topics are of a local, regional or national nature, the underlying theoretical basis requires wider reading which should be more clearly evidenced.

Master students have enough opportunities advertised by university to go abroad by mobility programmes. However, students do not participate in mobility programmes. In the period 2009–2016, no students of Administration of Rural Development left for ERASMUS exchange

programme. There should be some problems why students do not use this opportunity. Three types of problems were stated in SER: job, financial support, language skills. It is obvious that job could be a very important issue. But during the site visit it was obvious that language skills are quite poor (and it was really surprising after meeting very professional language department staff). It would be helpful to deliver more courses in English for Lithuanian group or in some other ways to encourage learning foreign languages. English courses could also help with improving other important for master level skills.

The level of academic support for students is satisfactory. Students and alumni stressed that it is easy to get all consultations and information needed for studies from lecturers and from administration. Students are highly appreciative of the support they receive from their teachers.

Social support system is really impressive in this University. Financial assistance, scholarships and provision of dormitory is easily reachable for students. All students who ask can get dormitory etc. During the visit, it was felt that administration and lecturers are very supportive for international students and trying to make cultural adaptation as easy as possible.

The student assessment structure is very well explained, clear and transparent. University provided documents where the connections between grading system (ten-point scale) and learning outcomes are clearly stated and these documents are on the website. Assessment is measured by cumulative scheme: paper works, tests, mid-term examination, final examination, presentations and others. The description of each study course includes learning outcomes, learning methods and achievement assessment methods. The description of the programme and courses is publicly available through Internet website.

Students and alumni said that they are getting some comments about their papers, homework and so on. But it wasn't clear how this procedure is organized (formal/informal). It is obvious that in bachelor level it could be harder to manage, but master level where groups are smaller that could be more easily done. There could be advantage to require all teachers to provide prompt and supportive written feedback to support student learning. That would help students to reach learning outcomes (especially when we are speaking about different international student level). Also, the accreditation team may wish to consider employing more open-book or some higher-level examinations in order to test all aspects of students' learning (critical thinking, analytical skills etc.). These higher level analytical skills should be as a goal for master level.

Students of second-level programme have no or less problems in finding jobs, because most of the applicants for the programme are already active in the labor market. According to, ASU Career Centre, alumni from this programme work in diverse places. It could be a good idea to discuss more about programme scope in the light of the graduate professional activities. Nevertheless, graduates state that their jobs are very connected with their studies and they are using knowledge they got during their studies.

## ***2.6. Programme management***

As the Aleksandras Stulginskis University BA and MA programmes in the administration of rural development are managed following a broadly similar logic and with regard to their congruence the comments are on programme management are generally similar while adding the programme specific comments where needed.

The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated. Both the self-evaluation report and the site visit give the ground to conclude that there is a clear division of responsibilities among the various institutions, the roles, procedures and outputs are understandable and systematic. Programme management is thoroughly elaborated and also taken care of in practice.

Information and data on the implementation of the programme is regularly collected mainly through electronic surveys among students and alumni outlined in the self-evaluation report. Also, meetings with social partners are used for data collection and evaluation of the work with the programme. The collected data seems to be analysed and utilised in various layers, mainly: (1) teacher's self-reflection and work in developing the content of courses, (2) assessment of teacher's performance by superiors, e.g. in deciding on prolonging the contracts, (3) work with the content and implementation of the curriculum through various committees and councils. It is hard to assess the degree of exploitation of the accumulated knowledge but the system seems to be in place and working. All in all the range of various ICT possibilities for studies, teaching and management deserves a positive acknowledgement.

Based on the report and site visit it can be concluded that the internal quality assurance measures are elaborated and in place. It is more difficult to assess their effectiveness and efficacy. While the system seems to be working the measures could be even too elaborated and build up a too heavy administrative burden. For example, during the site visit the accreditation team learned



that there were 6 layers of preparing and reviewing the self-evaluation report in the university. Several layers of internal reporting may generate a too extensive material and information flow with too many steps in university hierarchy. It could be considered that in future there would be one clear responsible actor for quality assurance (e.g. head of programme/programme council) and one clear monitoring level (e.g. vice rector for studies office).

University has regularly participated in the national quality assurance system evaluation. With regard to external quality assurance there is a summary of recommendations of the previous, 2009 evaluation and the assessment of the progress in implementing these. University seems to have acted broadly in line with the recommendations and made progress in some aspects, e.g. student feedback and marketing. There is still space for improvement e.g. with the final thesis and student international mobility. In broad terms, the outcomes of internal and external evaluation of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme.

MA programme seems to have more challenges with ensuring sufficient students intake, both in its Lithuanian and English version. There is also a constant need to find an adequate way for students from the respective BA programme and with different educational basis. This needs to be sorted out also in the programme management both in terms of content and marketing. A possible enhancement could be a well comprehensible visual material in the university web page demonstrating what competences will be further developed from the BA programme and how will entrants with a different background obtain the basic competences.

The programme seems to have a strong and diverse partners' network, with many institutions represented and people participating. The partners include e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture respective unit, municipal authorities and local non-governmental actors and their associations. The partners see the programme as relevant and are broadly satisfied with it. As discussed during the site visit the partnership activities include student practical training, expert work by the members of academic staff, regular social partners meeting and ad hoc contacts. Partners tend to emphasise the practical aspects in further development of the curriculum, while university also has to pay attention to academic aspects and find an adequate balance and develop a university type of curriculum (not a college type applied curriculum).

Overall the programme is well managed. A possible point of further reflection is, would it be possible to achieve similar results with less administrative burden. Maintaining a complex implementation and monitoring system may lead to a risk of focusing too much on bureaucratic

aspects of programme provision at the expense of attention to academic aspects (e.g. research methods, quality of thesis, public administration content).

Another point to consider in programme management is creating synergy between studies in Lithuanian and English language version of the programme. For example, there could be an opportunity or even a requirement for Lithuanian version students to take one or some course(s) in English with their English version counterparts. Mutual exchange could also be fostered during the more practical aspects of the curriculum where the Lithuanian version students could help their peers with the national and local context.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. ASU are recommended to rethink - according to the programme aims and learning outcomes - the choice of branch and change it or to better highlight the public administration affiliation of the programme.
2. As programme is delivered in English it is necessary to ensure to have more literature on Public Administration in English.
3. It is recommended to develop student's skills of academic research designs and methods. A suggestion is to start Master programme with an "orientation week" to make sure students have similar basic knowledge from taken different bachelor programmes at ASU or other universities, national or international. Letting students take part in Young research conferences, where students need to present an article is a good practice, which is already used at ASU. The close relationship between students and teachers and involving students in on-going research is a great opportunity, which is offered at this programme.
4. Stronger integration of the subjects of public administration is recommended to be developed into the programme.
5. Courses offered in English are recommended to be developed for international and Lithuanian students together to create synergy between studies in Lithuanian and English language version of the programme. A suggestion is for Lithuanian students to take one or some course(s) in English with their English version counterparts. Lithuanian students could help their peers with the national and local context during the more practical aspects of the course.

#### **IV. SUMMARY**

The panel team was provided with a large number of documents and students thesis, which complimented the self-evaluation report (SER) together with meetings with more than 60 persons involved in the different programmes. The team were surprised there was five different versions of the program with the same syllabus since this was not mentioned in the SER, which made the evaluation process sometimes confusing. Recommendations are made to stress the learning outcomes related to research process. Regardless of this, the overall impression of this programme and it's organisation is satisfactory.

It seems to be a good relation and communication between teachers and students. Ambition of students is high. There was an impressive collaboration between ASU and different professional actors in the region, a strong community feeling. Even thou the Faculty seem to be very organised, the administrative burden for teaching staff seems to be high. Localities/facilities at ASU have recently been renovated and are good.

Study programme delivered in English show some prospects. ASU are able to recruit international students and shows they are vital and have strengths in given lectures in a foreign language. According to students, ASU has a good reputation internationally. Students are ambitious and plan to go back to their own countries to work with society changes and rural development or continue into doctoral studies. By combining classes for Lithuanian and international students, which is something the accreditation team recommend to be developed students will gain knowledge from different perspectives. Level of internationalisation is high for incoming students but can be developed to increase the amount of out-going students.

Further recommendations are to improve areas of research methods: English literature at the library can be developed. Chosen subject for thesis can be better balanced to the subject public administration and management. According to the site visit it is easy to find professionals in the field, who can give supervisors through all the organisations who would like to take part in the programme.

Providing a special room for improving academic research methods is good. Since research methods vary, rooms should also. A possibility, which can be used, is to collaborate with different programmes at the university to develop this further.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Administration of Rural Development* (state code – 621N70002) at Aleksandras Stulginskis University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

| No. | Evaluation Area                                    | Evaluation of an area in points* |
|-----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1.  | Programme aims and learning outcomes               | 2                                |
| 2.  | Curriculum design                                  | 2                                |
| 3.  | Teaching staff                                     | 3                                |
| 4.  | Facilities and learning resources                  | 3                                |
| 5.  | Study process and students' performance assessment | 3                                |
| 6.  | Programme management                               | 3                                |
|     | <b>Total:</b>                                      | <b>16</b>                        |

\*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.

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Grupės vadovas:<br>Team leader: | PhD. Maria Wolmesjö                             |
| Grupės nariai:<br>Team members: | PhD. Benedikt Friedrich-Albert Konstantin Speer |
|                                 | PhD. Leif Kalev                                 |
|                                 | PhD. dr. Regimantas Čiupaila                    |
|                                 | Ms Augustė Dementavičienė                       |

**ALEKSANDRO STULGINSKIO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS  
KAIMO PLĖTROS ADMINISTRAVIMAS (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621N70002)  
2017-04-20 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV8-62 IŠRAŠAS**

<...>

**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Aleksandro Stulginskio studijų programa *Kaimo plėtros administravimas* (valstybinis kodas – 621N70002) vertinama teigiamai.

| <b>Eil.<br/>Nr.</b> | <b>Vertinimo sritis</b>                          | <b>Srities<br/>įvertinimas,<br/>balais*</b> |
|---------------------|--|---|
| 1.                  | Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai | 2   |
| 2.                  | Programos sandara                                | 2   |
| 3.                  | Personalas                                       | 3   |
| 4.                  | Materialieji ištekliai                           | 3   |
| 5.                  | Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas                   | 3   |
| 6.                  | Programos vadyba                                 | 3   |
|                     | <b>Iš viso:</b>                                  | <b>16</b>                                   |

\* 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**

Ekspertų grupei buvo pateikta nemažai dokumentų ir studentų darbų, kurie papildė savianalizės suvestinę, o susitikimai vyko su daugiau nei 60 asmenų, susijusių su skirtingomis programomis. Ekspertai nustebo sužinoję, kad yra penkios skirtingos studijų programos versijos, turinčios tą patį dalykų turinį, nors tai nebuvo minėta savianalizės suvestinėje, todėl kartais buvo painu vertinti. Rekomenduojama akcentuoti studijų rezultatus, susijusius su tyrimų procesu. Nepaisant to, bendras įspūdis apie šią studijų programą ir jos organizavimą yra geras.

Panašu, kad dėstytojų ir studentų tarpusavio santykiai ir bendravimas yra geri. Studentų ambicijos didelės. Pastebėtas išpūdingas ASU ir įvairių regione dirbančių specialistų bendradarbiavimas ir stiprus bendruomeniškumo jausmas. Nors fakultetas atrodo labai organizuotas, dėstytojams tenkanti administracinė našta yra didelė. ASU infrastruktūra ir materialioji bazė neseniai buvo atnaujintos ir yra geros kokybės.

Anglų kalba vykdoma studijų programa turi perspektyvų. ASU geba pritraukti užsienio studentų ir demonstruoja, kad yra gyvybingas ir pajėgus vykdyti studijas užsienio kalba. Pasak studentų, ASU turi gerą tarptautinę reputaciją. Studentai yra ambicingi ir ketina grįžti į savo šalis bei dirbti su visuomenės pokyčiais ir kaimo plėtra arba tęsti doktorantūros studijas. Sujungus Lietuvos ir užsienio studentų paskaitas, kaip rekomenduoja ekspertų grupė, studentai įgis žinių skirtingais aspektais. Tarptautiškumo lygis yra aukštas, vertinant atvykstančiųjų studentų skaičių, tačiau išvykstančiųjų studentų skaičių reikėtų didinti.

Toliau pateikiamos rekomendacijos, kaip gerinti tyrimų metodų aspektą. Galima papildyti bibliotekos išteklius literatūra anglų kalba. Pasirinktas baigiamųjų darbų temas galima geriau pritaikyti dalykui „Viešasis administravimas ir valdymas“. Vizito metu nustatyta, kad tarp visų organizacijų, pageidaujančių dalyvauti studijų programoje, nesunku rasti srities specialistų, galinčių pasiūlyti konsultantus.

Specialūs kabinetai mokslinių tyrimų metodams tobulinti yra sveikintini. Tačiau kadangi tyrimų metodai skiriasi, kabinetai taip pat turėtų skirtis. Šį aspektą galima toliau tobulinti bendradarbiaujant su skirtingomis universiteto vykdomomis studijų programomis.

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### **III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

1. ASU rekomenduojama dar kartą apsvarstyti pasirinktą šaką, atsižvelgiant į programos tikslus ir studijų rezultatus, ir ją pakeisti arba labiau pabrėžti studijų programos priskyrimą viešojo administravimo sričiai.
2. Kadangi programa vykdoma anglų kalba, būtina užtikrinti, kad būtų daugiau literatūros viešojo administravimo tema anglų kalba.
3. Rekomenduojama ugdyti studentų mokslinių tyrimų dizaino ir metodų įgūdžius. Siūloma magistrantūros studijų pradžioje praveisti įvadinę savaitę, siekiant užtikrinti, kad studentai, baigę skirtingas ASU ar kitų šalies ar užsienio universitetų bakalauro studijų programas, turėtų panašių bazinių žinių. Studentų dalyvavimas jaunųjų tyrėjų konferencijose, kuriose jie turi pristatyti savo straipsnius, yra gera praktika, jau naudojama ASU. Glaudūs studentų ir dėstytojų tarpusavio ryšiai bei studentų įtraukimas į vykdomus tyrimus yra puiki galimybė, siūloma šioje studijų programoje.
4. Rekomenduojama labiau integruoti viešojo administravimo dalykus į studijų programą.

5. Rekomenduojama parengti dalykus anglų kalba, dėstomus bendrai užsienio ir Lietuvos studentams, norint sukurti lietuvių ir anglų kalba vykdomų studijų programos versijų sinergiją. Lietuvos studentams siūloma kartu su užsienio studentais studijuoti vieną ar kelis dalykus, dėstomus anglų kalba. Lietuvos studentai galėtų padėti savo bendramoksliams susipažinti su šalies ir vietos situacija studijuojant labiau praktinius dalyko aspektus.

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Paslaugos teikėjas patvirtina, jog yra susipažinęs su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė,  
parašas)