



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**KLAIPĖDOS UNIVERSITETO  
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS  
*VAIKYSTĖS PEDAGOGIKA (612X11002)*  
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT  
OF *CHILDHOOD PEDAGOGY (612X11002)*  
STUDY PROGRAMME  
AT KLAIPEDA UNIVERSITY**

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Vaikystės pedagogika
Valstybinis kodas	612X11002
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Pedagogika
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (4), iššęstinė (5,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Ikimokyklinio ugdymo pedagogikos bakalauras, Pedagogas
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2007-04-27

## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Childhood Pedagogy
State code	612X11002
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	Pedagogy
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study Cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (4), part time (5,5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor in Pedagogy of Preschool Education; Pedagogue
Date of registration of the study programme	2007-04-27

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (30 April 2009 No XI-242) which established the “principles of quality assurance in higher education and research” and in accordance with the “Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes” approved by Order No. ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 96-4083). It takes due cognisance of the Order of the Minister for Education and Science approving the general requirements of the first degree and integrated study programmes (9 April 2010 No V-501) pursuant to Articles 47.8, 48.3 and 48.7 of the Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No. 54-2140) and also takes due account of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science “Concerning Approval of the Pedagogues’ Training Regulations” No. V-54 of 8 January 2010 and subsequent amendments (12 December 2012 No. V-1742).

An External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has conducted an Evaluation of the Childhood Pedagogy Programme (612X11002) (hereinafter CP) at Klaipeda University. In conducting their evaluation of the Study Programme, the EET have acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) as well as being guided by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

The External Evaluation was conducted in the period August 2013 to December 2013 with in-country evaluation taking place during the period 13 October 2013 to 19 October 2013. The Evaluation included a one-day field visit to Klaipeda University on Tuesday, 15 October 2013.

This report does not paraphrase or re-present the range of information presented in the Report of the Self-Assessment Group (hereinafter SAG). Instead, it focuses on issues raised in the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter SER) as well as raising some issues not addressed in the SER but which came to the attention of the EET during the course of the Team’s time in Lithuania, and, specifically, during the course of the field visit.

In addition to its examination of the SER, the EET collected information, data and evidence on which to base its conclusions in the course of the field visit through meetings and other means:

- Meeting with administrative staff of Klaipeda University
- Meeting with the staff responsible for the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report
- Meeting with teaching staff
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with graduates
- Meeting with employers of those who have graduated from the programme
- Visiting and observing various support services (classrooms, library, computer services, staff developments, laboratories, etc.)
- Examination and familiarization with students’ final works, examination material.

At the end of the field visit, the initial impressions of the team were conveyed to the teaching staff of the programme.

We would like to express our appreciation to the authorities of Klaipeda University 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 by those with whom we came in contact at the University.

The EET would like to pay tribute to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and, most especially, to Agnė Tamošiūnaitė for all of the support given to EET before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The SER (in Paragraph 1) notes that Klaipeda University (hereinafter: KU), established in 1991, is “a poly-structural centre of science and culture in the Western Lithuanian Region”. KU has seven faculties (of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Humanities, Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Marine Engineering, Arts, and Pedagogy). The SER points out that KU employs over 500 of the academic staff and has about 6,500 students. The University implements studies in all three cycles: undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral.

The Faculty’s other first cycle programmes are in Social Pedagogy, Educology, Childhood Pedagogy, Psychology, Religious Pedagogy and Psychology, and Physical Education and Sports, most of which have been successfully externally assessed within the past five years. Paragraph 2 of the SER points out that the Childhood Pedagogy Programme (612X11002) is administered by the Department of Childhood Pedagogy of the Pedagogy Faculty. This Department is responsible for one graduate study programme (*Family Educology and Protection of Child Rights*) and two undergraduate study programmes (*Childhood Pedagogy* and *Childhood Pedagogy and Early Foreign Language Teaching*).

According to Paragraph 3 of the SER, the Department of CP employs 1 professor, 5 associate professors, 1 lecturer, PhD, and 3 lecturers as full-time academic staff, and 2 lecturers, PhD, and 2 assistants as part-time academic staff. The Department is also in charge of 6 doctoral students (including four writing PhD theses in the field of childhood pedagogy).

The self-evaluation process was commenced on 18 October 2012, by order of the Rector of KU. Paragraph 6 and an accompanying table identifies the seven members of the SAG and gives their specific responsibilities within the group. EET is pleased to note that stakeholders were included within the group and, as was confirmed in discussions with the SEG during the institutional visit, these members had meaningful responsibilities to play in the process

The SER, in Paragraph 7, gives details of the stages of the self-assessment process through the period from September 2012 to January 2013, commencing with “acquaintanceship with the self-assessment methodology” in September 2012. The process as outlined seems to have gone through all the appropriate stages that would be expected. However, no detail is given in relation to how the “acquaintanceship” was delivered, by whom or to whom. Neither are we told how many members of the Faculty, of the SAG or of the teaching staff were involved nor is it clear whether the external stakeholders on the SAG had the opportunity to participate (since they were only formally appointed in the following month).

In the course of the institutional visit, EET had an opportunity to raise these issues with the SEG. EET was informed that the training had been offered by SKVC but that only the Head of the Department had attended this training in 2011. Subsequently, there had been some training at KU which was offered by visiting professors from Kaunas. The SEG believed that they had followed the regulations.

EET expressed its concern that the SER was not set out in the same sequence as is laid down in the current SKVC template which EET is expected to use in making its assessment. As a consequence, the EET had to search through the document to find the evidence required for completing its template. For example, as will be clear from Section 2.1.1 below, the EET had to go to Paragraphs 4, 13, 14 and 20 in order to find evidence in relation to the programme's aims and learning outcomes.

EET conducted an evaluation of two programmes at KU: the Childhood Pedagogy Programme (612X11002) and also the Childhood Pedagogy and Early Foreign Language Teaching Study Programme (612X12001), in abbreviation, CP and CP-EFTL, respectively. When EET was making its advance preparations for the institutional visit and for the programme evaluation, EET found that considerable use had been made of the "Copy & Paste" function on the word processor by those responsible for preparing the SERs for both programmes. While this does not cause any problem where the points being made are relevant to both programmes and where they are valid, it causes considerable difficulty for EET when it is clear that statements are being made in relation to the CP programme which have already been made in relation to the CP EFTL programme and which have simply been copied across to the CP SER without due modification, even the correction of the acronym "CP EFTL" which, inappropriately, appears in Paragraphs 32, 43, 84 (twice), 99 and 104 of the CP document (cf. also Paragraphs 35, 46, 87 and 99 of the CP EFTL SER).

In its joint meeting with the SEGs of both programmes, EET drew attention to the fact that there was significant overlap between both reports with elements of one report being replicated in the other. For example, the entire section (2.1.3) on Staff is virtually identical in both reports with Paragraphs 44 to 61 inclusive of this report being identical to Paragraphs 41 to 58 inclusive of the CP SER (with the exception of Paragraphs 51, 53, 54, and 58 of this Report and Paragraphs 48, 50, 51 and 55 of the CP SER where some textual and numerical modifications have been made). While recognising that many staff are involved in both programmes, EET has been set the task of evaluating each programme separately and depends on a clarity of response in relation to all aspects of the evaluation instrument. University Administrators and the SEGs acknowledged that both groups had collaborated closely in their preparation of the SERs. EET stated that collaboration was not a problem as both teams might have learned from each other but that erroneous statements and data, coming from one Report into the other, were not acceptable.

Separately, it should be noted here that whereas the SER presented its analysis of the full-time programme (Paragraphs 10 to 119, inclusive) and of the part-time programme (Paragraphs 120 to 152, inclusive), EET sees both of these as separate modes of delivery rather than as separate programmes and, for that reason, wherever EET wishes to make a comment in regard to the part-time programme evaluation, it is included in the text which follows rather than being presented separately.

**Note:** In regard to the part-time variant of the programme, EET is concerned that a separate review of the part-time mode has been presented as this seems to suggest that KU considers this to be somehow separate and different from the full-time programme. The reality is that there is a single programme, even if it is delivered in two different modes. For this reason, in-so-far as EET has any specific comments to make on the part-time programme, these have been included in the narrative above rather than being dealt with separately.

The EET has carefully considered the response of the University to the Draft Report. As there was no factual error pointed out, the EET did not find it necessary to make any changes to the draft.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

**2.1.1** As to whether **the programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible**, the SER, in Paragraph 4, says that, since it was initiated in 2008, the undergraduate study programme of *Childhood Pedagogy* has been oriented “towards the training of a pre-school education pedagogue who possesses fundamental general and professional qualification knowledge, who is able to apply them to practice, to think in a conceptual, critical, and creative way, and to constantly improve himself by reflecting on his own experience and activity and by observing the changes in his professional field”. Paragraph 4 also clearly sets out the goal of the programme as follows:

The pedagogue shall be able to get to know and analyze the general laws of the child’s psycho-social development, shall know the significance of the child’s environment, psychological, national, cultural, social, economic, and political factors on (self-) education, shall be able to create and to maintain child’s safe development, the environment that promotes activity and individuality, shall be able to design the content of pre-school and pre-primary education, to work in a team, and to generate new ideas.

Paragraph 13 of the SER sets out the aim of the programme as being “to ensure students’ undergraduate pedagogical education in compliance with the European standards, to develop general and specialist competences necessary for the professional activity in the education of young, pre-school, and pre-primary age children, and/or to prepare students for the graduate studies”. In the course of its institutional visit, EET had the opportunity to discuss the clarity of the programme aims with members of the SEG and was pleased to note that there was considerable clarity around the purpose of this particular programme, with one member of the SEG explaining that “the main aim of this programme is to help a student become a specialist of pre-school education, working in the contemporary and the future environment”.

The SER, in Paragraph 20, points out that the aim of the study programme and the intended learning outcomes are placed on the AIKOS system ([www.aikos.smm.lt](http://www.aikos.smm.lt)) and on the website of Klaipeda University ([www.ku.lt](http://www.ku.lt)). Table 1 and Paragraph 14 of the SER (reproduced here) sets out the programme’s study outcomes in terms of both general and professional competences of different levels.

**Table 1** **The outcomes of the CP study programme**

No.	Competences		Outcomes
<b>General competences</b>			
1.	Instrumental competences	1.1	Acquisition of fundamental general and professional qualification knowledge and its application to practice.
		1.2	The ability to responsibly manage the environment: to plan and organize time, to make decisions, and to solve problems.
		1.3	The ability to choose, analyze, systematize, use, and convey information by means of different technologies and information sources.
		1.4	The ability to think in a conceptual, critical, and creative way, to constantly improve by reflecting on one’s own experience and activity, given the changes in the professional field.



		1.5	The ability to correctly use the native and foreign languages in the professional environment by using different ways and means of communication.
2.	Interpersonal competences	2.1	The ability to appropriately express one's own feelings and views, to perceive and assess one's own activity and its outcomes in a critical and self-critical way.
		2.2	The ability to ethically communicate and collaborate, to hear others, to understand and motivate them, to have initiative and to be honest in the pursuit of interaction and common aims.
		2.3	The understanding, recognition, and tolerance of cultural diversity, the ability to work in a multicultural and international environment.
		2.4	The ability to work in a team, to maintain professional relations with specialists and other persons, and to participate in social activity.
3.	Systemic competences	3.1.	The knowledge of learning strategies and the ability to constantly learn and to generate new ideas.
		3.2.	The ability to apply theory knowledge to practice, to work independently and creatively by choosing an appropriate strategy of professional activity.
		3.3.	The ability to analyze and assess the situation of professional activity, to perceive and plan the opportunities of its improvement, to initiate projects and/or another activity, and to realize and characterize the obtained result in a quality way.
		3.4	The ability to assess the needs of one's own personal and professional activity and professional competences, to plan one's own career.
<b>Professional competences</b>			
4.	The competence of the knowledge of children	4.1	The knowledge of the general laws of the physical, cognitive, and psycho-social development of pre-school and pre-primary school child and the ability to assess them.
		4.2.	The ability of getting to know and analyzing the needs of pre-school and pre-primary school child, of individualizing and differentiating the ways of meeting them, and of developing individual programmes.
		4.3.	To know the significance of the child's environment and of psychological, national, cultural, social, economic, and political factors for (self-) education.
		4.4.	The ability to identify, interpret, and summarize the level of children's achievements and the progress made by them.
5.	The competence of management of the educational process and of the education content modeling	5.1	The ability to model the content of pre-school and pre-primary education by promoting child's spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual improvement.
		5.2	The ability to analyze, plan, organize, and assess the activity of child and children's group.
		5.3	The knowledge of strategies, conceptions, technologies, and innovative ways and techniques of (self-) education and the ability to apply them.
		5.4	The ability to manage a pedagogical interaction by combining children's (self-) education, protection, and care and by building one's activities on the recognition of child rights and the requirements for their protection.
		5.5	The knowledge of child's pedagogical, psychological, social, and legal problems and the ability to manage psycho-social and educational interventions.
		5.6.	The ability to create and maintain a safe (self-) education environment promoting child's development, activity, creativity, and independence by fostering different areas of activity and socio-cultural integration.
6.	The competence of collaboration	6.1.	The ability to involve family in an active pedagogical

			interaction, given the specificity of child's (self-) education in family and child's individuality.
	with other participants of education	6.2.	The ability to systematically provide family with social and educational services seeking child's quality (self-) education.
		6.3.	The ability to collaborate with other specialists working in a group or an institution, as well as with the administration, on the issues of children's (self-) education and the management of the institution.
		6.4.	The ability to work in a team with the institutions and specialists of child's education, care, and assistance by seeking social partnership.
7.	Research competence	7.1.	The ability to collect and analyze research data necessary for the solution of a problem; to assess and interpret a problematic situation and to recognize the need for a change.
		7.2.	The ability to design pedagogical research: to know the methodology of scientific and empirical research, to select an appropriate research strategy, structure, and techniques.
		7.3.	The ability to organize research into professional activity: to use different sources of information, to collect theoretical and empirical material, to analyze, interpret, and summarize it.
		7.4.	The ability of quality development and clear and justified presentation of the report of pedagogical research.

A later table (Table 3), presents the curriculum of the study programme, while a further Table (no table number given) on pp. 14 and 15 of the SER presents a matrix showing the interrelationship between the Learning Outcomes and the content of the programme.

**2.1.2** In relation to the extent to which **the programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market**, this issue seems to be addressed in Paragraph 11 of the SER which outlines the “educational aspirations” of various European declarations and documents. This paragraph also notes the conformity of the programme with the national education policy and its regulatory documents. Although these documents are listed, there are no specific statements to give supporting evidence as to how any aspects of the programme meet the specific requirements of these documents. In regard to **the public needs and the needs of the labour market**, Paragraph 18 of the SER presents the statistical underpinning for the programme, based on data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics in 2011, showing the growing number of children attending crèches and other pre-school care facilities, together with a predicted increase in the birth-rate to 2015 and the need for a greater level of private provision as indicators of the needs in this area. These factors, along with an aging cohort of pedagogues in pre-school establishments, all contribute to a growing demand. Paragraph 19 identifies the specific needs of Western Lithuania in this regard, identifying all the needs listed above but also noting the problems arising from waiting lists for places along with overcrowding in existing facilities (based on data from the Education Department of Klaipeda City Municipality, 2012).

**2.1.3** As to whether **the programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered**, Paragraph 12 of the SER notes that this is a programme of the first cycle. Paragraph 12 goes on to show how, as a Level 6 programme, this degree meets the requirements of both the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework. This paragraph also notes that graduates of the programme are awarded a Bachelors degree along with the qualification of “Pedagogue”. Paragraph 10 notes that “the acquired qualification grants them the right to work as pedagogues in crèches/ kindergartens, pre-school age children groups, educational centres, or other

institutions providing education services in accordance with the qualification requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and /or to continue in graduate studies”. Paragraph 15 repeats this and adds that graduates may work in “institutions of children’s formal and non-formal education, or they can provide educational services of a different character to pedagogues and other specialists working with children and family”. Paragraph 15 also notes that graduates are also expected “to become founders of private institutions and providers of new services and jobs”. EET is concerned that the listing of institutions in Paragraph 10 is significantly narrower than that in Paragraph 15 which seems to offer the prospect of qualification for a far wider range of institution, for some of which EET would feel the graduate may not be properly qualified. EET concerns on this matter are reinforced by the lack of clarity in aspects of the SER, such as in Paragraph 12 which indicates that the graduates will carry the qualification of a “pedagogue” whereas Paragraph 15 emphasises that the graduates “can provide educational services of a different character to pedagogues”

**2.1.4** In relation to the extent to which **the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other**, EET is satisfied that this programme can be regarded as a Level 6 programme. However, **in relation to the name of the programme**, EET wonders why the programme is called simply “Childhood Pedagogy”. While this title has the benefit of indicating a positive focus on the child and the needs of the child, the fact that “childhood” itself ranges from the time of birth up to the teens suggests a much broader range of study than is appropriate for a programme that is focussed on “the education of young, pre-school, and pre-primary age children”, as indicated in the goal cited in Paragraph 13. For this reason, it is recommended that the authorities of KU give consideration to the use of a more clearly defined title, such as “Early Childhood Care and Education” or “Early Years Education” and a specification of the age range with which these graduates are being prepared to work.

**2.1.5** In relation to the **strengths and weaknesses** of the study programme, EET accepts the identified strengths (in Paragraph 21), which relate to the aims and learning outcomes, although EET, for the reasons outlined above, queries the accuracy of the title of the programme. In regard to the single **weakness** identified by the SAG, EET notes that no evidence was presented to substantiate this weakness in the SER, which means that this should also be seen as a weakness of the SER itself.

In summary, EET sees as a positive feature the fact that the programme aims are generally clear. A further positive element is to be found in the awareness of labour market demands which are informed by relatively recent data. EET considers the name “Childhood Pedagogy” to be positive. However, because the period of ‘childhood’ is long, it feels that this name should be further clarified, possibly using a term such as “Early Childhood” or “Early Years”, accompanied by a more specific statement of the ages of the ultimate target population of this degree. On the negative end of the spectrum, EET also considers that there is some lack of clarity as to whether the person qualifying from the programme is to be considered a “pedagogue” or something more than that. EET is concerned that some of the statements in the SER about the settings in which the graduates may work seem to take them far beyond the sharp focus on becoming a pre-school educator that is set out in the programme aims.

## **2.2 Curriculum design**

**2.2.1** As to whether **the curriculum design meets legal requirements**, Paragraph 34 of the SER states that

The first-cycle CP study programme was developed in 2007, on the basis of *Klaipėda University Study Regulations (2007)*; *The Conception of Pre-School Education (2000)*, *The Provisions of the National Education Strategies for 2003–2012 (2003)*; *The Standard of Pre-School Education (2003)*, *A Sample Job Description of a Pre-School Education Pedagogue (2003)*, *A Sample Job Description of an Educator (2005)*, and others.

Paragraph 5 of the SER notes that the programme has been registered as required by Order No. ĮSAK-786 (“*On Registration of Higher Education University Study and Training Programmes in the Register of Study and Training Programmes*”) as well as its having been approved by the Senate of KU.

Paragraph 22 (and paragraph 121 and 124 in the case of the part-time variant) of the SER notes that the volume of the programme (240 ECTS credits) complies with the requirements laid out in legal acts, as required by Order No. V-501, 9 April 2010, (“*On Approval of the Descriptor of General Requirements for Degree Awarding First Cycle and Integrated Study Programmes*”). Paragraph 30 of the SER repeats the statement that the volume of credits is in compliance with Order No. V-501, 09-04-2010.

Paragraph 28 (and paragraph 123 in the case of the part-time variant) of the SER indicates how, in accordance, with KU study regulations, the number of academic subjects taken in one semester does not exceed the number indicated in legal acts.

**2.2.2** As to whether the **study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly** and as to whether **their themes are not repetitive**, Paragraph 27 of the SER, along with Table 3, details the “Curriculum of the Programme”. However, other than the statement that “the development of the CP study programme sought for the consistency and logical sequence of the subject arrangement”, the SER does not seem to specifically address the issue of repetition nor does it make any explicit comments on the spread of study subjects or of modules. EET has concerns that the programme is fragmentary with a great many programme elements and that there is little evidence of students gradually building their knowledge and competence as they study because the programme is presented in such a fragmentary manner. As Annex 3.1 shows, with the exception of Foreign Language (English) and Physical Culture to both of which the students return twice in the course of their studies, the underpinning rationale (if such a word is appropriate in this context) for the programme seems to be that students are presented with a menu of ‘one-off’ discrete areas of learning through which they progress rather than being challenged to go deeper into the core fields that they will need to comprehend as they build a professional understanding of Childhood Pedagogy.

**2.2.3** In relation to the requirement that **the content of the subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies**, Paragraph 24 presents something of the rationale for the inclusion of “general university subjects” in the programme. While it seems reasonable that “the studies of foreign languages are to contribute to students’ better communication and the studies of specialist literature”, it is less obvious why the subjects of “*Physical Culture*” and “*Philosophy*” were included, other than for the statement that these are “subjects important for basic teacher training”. It could equally be argued that areas such as “*Art*”, “*Psychology*” or “*Sociology*” would make an equally valid contribution to the “student’s general culture”.

Paragraph 25 details the electives that are available to students studying this programme. There are three types of elective on offer: general university education electives (3 credits), free-choice electives (8 credits), and study field electives (8 credits).

Paragraph 26 gives details of the KU regulations in regard to independent work ('independent work is to account for no less than 50% of the first cycle study programme'). The distribution of the contact and independent work hours in the course of studies is presented in Table 2 of the SER. This Table shows that for 1878 hours of contact there are 4494 hours of independent work. EET has some concerns about this very high expectation in regard to the student's independent work.

Paragraph 38 of the SER simply states, as a fact that

The aims of the study programme and the intended learning outcomes comply with the kind and cycle of study and the level of qualification in accordance with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (in compliance with the complexity, independence, and changeability of activity) (see # 12).

Beyond the examples given, the SER does not offer further evidence to show how **the content of the subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies.**

**2.2.4** The guidelines ask whether **the content and methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.** Arising from the fact that this programme is professionally oriented, producing practitioners ("pedagogues") who are accredited to work in crèches and other early childhood settings, EET examined the emphasis which the programme places on developing practical expertise. This is especially important as a core aim of this programme is "to develop general and specialist competences necessary for the professional activity in the education of young, pre-school, and pre-primary age children". This is done in two different ways at KU, firstly through academic subjects which include a practical dimension and, also, through formal practices. As part of its work, EET analysed the practice arrangements. EET was surprised by some of what occurs in the various practices.

**Table 2 Practices**

<i>Name of Practice</i>		<i>ECTS credits</i>	<i>Total number of hours</i>					
			<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>DC</i>	<i>IW</i>	<i>Total number of hours</i>
S000B056 Semester 2	<b>Educational Practice in Educational Institutions</b>	4.00	6	6	0	0	95	107
S000B064 Semester 3	<b>Child Observation Practice</b>	6.00	6	6	0	0	148	160
S000B080 Semester 5	<b>Pedagogical Practice</b>	6.00	6	6	0	0	148	160
S000B065 Semester 8	<b>Independent Practice of Pedagogical Work</b>	15.00	6	6	0	0	388	400

EET was surprised to note that there is no practice of any kind in either Semester 1 or Semester 4 in the case of full-time students and no practice in Semesters 1, 4, 6, 7, 8 or 11 in the case of part-time students. Practices are to be found in Semesters 2 (Educational Practice in Educational Institutions: 4 ECTS), Semester 3 (Child Observation Practice: 6 ECTS), Semester 5 (Pedagogical Practice: 6 ECTS) and in Semester 8 (Independent Practice of Pedagogical Work: 15 ECTS) and in Semester 10 in the case of part-time students. Each practice carries 6 Theory hours and 6 Practical hours but with a large number of hours of independent work (95 hours, 148 hours, 148 hours and 388 hours respectively). As the individual practices have quite different titles, there is no indication in the SER as to how they interlink or of how student learning progresses from one to the other building cumulatively on the practical learning experience.

The first practice is called “Educational Practice in Educational Institutions”. While this is called an “Educational Practice”, it is difficult to understand how it can merit such a title when the module is examined (Appendix 3.1, pp.66-69). This seems to be an example of “Learning about...” rather than “Learning through practising”. A part of the aim for this practice (Appendices, p. 66) is for students to “get acquainted with the activity of different educational institutions (crèches-kindergartens, infant homes)”. The aim does not indicate how many such settings any individual student should become acquainted with nor does it make clear how many different settings the individual may be placed in during the course of the practice.

Three of the four Learning Outcomes have a focus on knowledge acquisition, with only one relating to the practice of pedagogy. Assessment of these three Learning Outcomes is through a “Report. An Illustrated Presentation” while the fourth includes “Individual Work” as well as the inescapable “Illustrated Presentation”. While the “Summary” together with the regular references to a “Practice File” under “Sections and Themes” seem to indicate that this module is based in pre-school settings, the prescribed texts, the list of themes, the setting for lectures (Classical auditorium) as well as the amount of time devoted to taught classes (theory?), to preparing a report (40 hours) as well as to preparing and presenting a PowerPoint presentation (15 hours) all highlight how little time is left for practice. Finally, the fact that only 40% of the final grade is given for the individual work indicates that descriptions of the practice merit a greater weighting than the practice itself.

Similar problems are to be found in other practices. In the “Child Observation Practice”, the entirety of the grading is given to practice reports, to a literature review and to the illustrated presentation with no element of the grade being kept for examining the student’s capacity to interact effectively with children.

While the “Pedagogical Practice” seems to be well-structured as an experience, it is not clear how much time is dedicated to the various themes (‘T’, ‘P’ and ‘L’ times are given only for Themes No. 1 and 9). Furthermore, there is no detail on the role of the mentor or person in whose setting the practice takes place or of whether s/he has a role in grading. The role of the university supervisor is not clear. There is no evidence that the University supervisor (the “Coordinating Lecturer”?) ever visits the student in the course of the practice or conducts any assessment of the quality of the student’s work and interaction with the children in the setting or of their capacity to apply their “theoretical” knowledge in the “practical” setting. Finally, the grading of this practice gives rise to questions similar to those already identified. It seems extraordinary to EET that in this fifth Semester, there is no grading of the work of the individual, that 30% of the grade goes to a group project and that 70% of the grade is awarded for Reports and a Diary.

In relation to the final “Independent Practice of Pedagogical Work”, EET finds it extraordinary that the Learning Outcomes which seem fundamental to the work of a professional in any childcare setting should only now be clearly set down as goals for the Semester 8 practice and that this is the only practice in which students will have the opportunity to develop these critical skills and capabilities. It is not clear from the module description (Appendix 3.1 pp. 179-182) how many weeks are spent in the practice setting, as there are references to periods of “1-2 weeks”, “3-5 weeks”, “6-7 weeks” and “6-9 weeks”. The reading list seems to be an eclectic mix ranging from the “Education of Preschool Age Children” to festivals, games, kinetics and event management. The question needs to be asked whether it is appropriate to have any such readings included in this module since the practice should provide the opportunity to put into practice all of the theory that has been learned across all of the academic disciplines. In other

words, the student's practice should be informed by all of the students reading in every other area, rather than adding the burden of further reading to this practice.

When the practices are examined collectively, it becomes clear that they carry a weighting of just over 12% of the total credits available to the programme (31 ECTS out of 240 ECTS). This means that the practices are equivalent to one-eighth of the programme value. It is acknowledged that other subject areas (as listed in Table 2 carry a practical component) but this is understood more as understanding the practical applications of knowledge rather than having an opportunity to practice in the field.

**Table 2 Programme Components including a practicum**

<i>Academic subjects</i>		<i>ECTS credits</i>	<i>Total number of hours</i>					<i>Total number of hours</i>
			<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>DC</i>	<i>IW</i>	
S260B047 Semester 2	Child's Psychology (with a practicum)	5.00	30	0	15	0	88	133
S000B088 Semester 2	Pedagogical Research (with a practicum)	6.00	30	30	0	0	100	160
S000B043 Semester 3	Preschool Childhood Pedagogy (with a practicum)	6.00	30	30	0	0	100	160
S000B085 Semester 5	Preschool Education (with a practicum)	6.00	45	15	0	0	100	160
S000B173 Semester 6	Preschool Education Technologies (with a practicum)	7.00	50	25	0	0	112	187
S000B108 Semester 7	Integrated Education in Childhood (with a practicum)	6.00	20	20	20	0	100	160

While 827 hours is the total number of hours spent on the practice, this means that less than 20% of a student's total time is spent on the practice. With 48 hours (24 T and 24 P) being spent on the practice by staff, this equates to 2.5% of all hours of contact (1878 hours of contact, according to Table 2 of the SER) on the programme being dedicated to this area. This clearly indicates that supervising the practical is not seen as a significant part of the work associated with this programme. In the course of the institutional visit to KU, this issue was raised with members of the teaching staff who reported that prior to a practice two hours of theory and two hours of practical are dedicated to preparing the students for their placement. It was also indicated that the principal tutor is allowed 3½ hours per student per practice while the teachers of the main subjects may have 1 hour per students while those of less significant subjects are allowed ¾ hour per student per practice for their supervision.

When **Tables 2 and 3** above are taken together, this shows a total of 67 credits for all programme elements which include a practicum and/or a practice. This represents just 27.7% of the credit total for the programme. However, as no information is given here in regard to how significant a practicum might be within these individual programme elements, it is not possible to assess the weighting of the practical element. When the 'P' and 'L' (Practical and Laboratory) hours are taken together, this comes to 155 hours of practical work out of the total of 960 hours available to these six modules, representing 16% of the time.

EET is deeply concerned that early childhood practitioners are graduating from Lithuanian universities with only 120 hours of front-line experience when other countries require between 11 and 30 weeks of such experience. EET considers that the inadequacy of the practice length, and most especially the time students actually spend teaching children independently, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In the case of part-time students, EET notes that there is a very long gap between the third practice, which takes place in Semester 5 and the final practice which takes place in Semester 10. While EET is aware that many of the part-time students could well be employed in the practice setting, it is concerned that students may continue in less professional conduct when they do not have the benefit of the training associated with the final independent practice. EET also has some concerns at the statement, in Paragraph 132, that “for the practice in kindergartens, students living in other places than Klaipeda Region are allowed to find a practice site by themselves, provided it employs qualified educators complying to the requirements for practice mentors”. In the course of the institutional meeting with SEG, it was noted that a large number of mentors had been trained under the auspices of a European Union Project, based in the Teacher Education Centres, but it was also acknowledged that there is currently no such training programme in place. While EET is pleased to note the statement that mentors must be suitably qualified, it is concerned that these students allowed to practice in their home areas will not have the same opportunities to experience placements in a diversity of settings as will their full-time counterparts. EET considers that it should be mandatory for trainee professionals to gain experience during their period of training of the greatest possible diversity of work setting. In its meeting with alumni of the programme, EET found that there was strong support for such an approach among the former graduates.

The SER, in Paragraph 33 presents some evidence that the methods through which the students learn are appropriate to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. For example, it explains that the “subjects of the theory unit that provide the knowledge of pedagogue’s professional qualification and develop general and professional competences are mainly presented by means of oral, visual/ demonstrational, and reflexive practical methods”. However, it then goes on to say that “the feedback and achievement assessment are ensured by written assignments, independently prepared reports on the sources of scientific literature, and creative individual and group projects” and that the “practical skills are trained by case studies, by the analyses of problems, and the acquired experience”. Lastly, it notes that “research skills are developed in theory lectures, classes and seminars, individual consultations, and independent work”. In these statements, EET can find little evidence to show that practical work is valued and assessed in the practice rather than by way of written reports and case studies being presented. Indeed, when the Practice modules are analysed (Appendix 3.1 pp. it becomes clear that the actual work of the practitioner receives only minor attention. Even in the final “Independent Practice of Pedagogical Work”, the work of the individual student, which takes more than 25% of the modular time receives only 10% of the final grade while the great bulk of the grade (65%) is reserved for a diary, a report, a presentation and project work.

EET notes that at KU, the final thesis of pedagogical studies is called the “Final Work of Pedagogical Studies”. EET recommends that consideration be given to calling this the “Student Teaching Portfolio” as this would give a more accurate description of the modular content.

**2.2.5** In regard to the extent to which **the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes**, this issue does not seem to have been explicitly addressed in the SER. Paragraph 35 (and Appendix 3.1) sets out the manner in which the assessment of each subject is conducted.

EET is satisfied that the scope of the curriculum as presented is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes although EET is less satisfied that about the manner in which this is being done, most especially, in relation to the inadequate attention being devoted to the practical and professional learning outcomes and to their assessment.



**2.2.6** In relation to the extent to which **the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies**, the SER seems to be silent on this matter. In this context, EET was especially concerned that there was a lack of technological equipment at KU and to note that many schools have a higher level of digital resources. EET was especially concerned that there was no evidence of the preparation of students for using Information and Technological Communications (ICT) resources in a pedagogical manner. In the course of the meeting with Alumni, it was pointed out that when they had been at KU, there had been no interactive whiteboard at KU although the schools had them. In fact, they learned more about this area in the schools than at the University due to the lack of resources. Many schools were better equipped than the university in regard to Interactive Whiteboards, Smartboards, the use of e-registers, and the use of ICT for the teaching of Art, Language and Literacy, Music, Mathematics, etc. The lack of software and associated hardware for teaching Robotics, Games, etc. along with a general lack of awareness of materials freely available on the Internet was also noted. EET received some reassurances that there had been limited improvement, especially in regard to Smartboard training in recent times. However, when the current students were interviewed on this issue, they reported that, while there was indeed a single interactive whiteboard (which they had seen being used), they would only receive training in its use and on the pedagogical use of ICT in the second semester of Year Three.

**2.2.7** In relation to **strengths** and **weaknesses**, the SER identifies two strengths.

- the volume, structure, methods, and logic of the study programme comply to the requirements and the intended learning outcomes of the study programme;
- the harmony of the aims of the programme and the taken academic subjects enable the pursuit of high quality of the learning outcomes.

While it is satisfied that the curriculum design is clearly focussed on early childhood education, EET takes the view that it is reasonable to expect a university programme to illustrate both of the dimensions listed and for that reason, it does not see that either of these can be claimed as a particular strength of the CP programme at KU. for the reasons outlined earlier.

In relation to **weaknesses**, the SER indicates that “the virtual teaching/ learning environment is insufficiently applied”. EET is a little surprised by this, as it had not previously been noted anywhere in the discussion of the Curriculum Design element of the evaluation, although EET had noted that **Table 2** had shown zero hours for “Distance contact work” on every aspect and in every year of the programme. EET is somewhat disappointed that there seems to be little awareness at KU of the weakness of the CP programme from the perspective of the place and role in the degree of the practical work, its supervision, its assessment and its overall importance within a professional qualification.

On the positive side, EET welcomes the space made for “General University Subjects” although it is not convinced that the particular subjects chosen are the most appropriate for this programme. EET is also pleased to note that mentors are required to be trained, although it could not find evidence that this is being done currently for newer educators. However, the SER does not give any information on the kind of training provided, which EET would have welcomed.

On the other hand, EET is very concerned at the approach to the practice outlined in the four practice modules and feels that the structure of these modules does little to ensure that graduates reach the level that would be expected at the award of a Level 6 degree in Childhood Pedagogy.

EET is also very concerned about the place of the professional practice in the programme, most especially in regard to the level of grade awarded to this core element of professional training

and also in the proportion of the grade awarded to the student for his/her individual work on the practice.

EET is concerned that early childhood practitioners are graduating from KU with a very small number of hours teaching independently in classrooms. EET considers that the inadequacy of the practice length needs to be addressed urgently.

## **2.3 Staff**

**2.3.1** As to whether **the study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements**, Paragraph 50 of the SER states that the teaching staff meet the requirements of Order No.V-501 in relation to their professional qualification, research experience, academic experience, and total work record. Paragraph 50 goes on to say that the teachers “have sufficient (no shorter than 3 years) experience of practical work in compliance with the academic subjects taught by them, and their research activity complies to the subjects taught in the assessed undergraduate study programme”. EET notes that the Order referred to does not identify any specific requirements in relation to the field of Preschool Pedagogy. The SER (Paragraph 130) notes that the same academic staff are employed for part-time as for full-time studies.

**2.3.2** In regard to the issue of **whether the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes**, Appendix 3.2 of the SER lists the members of the academic staff on the programme, giving their academic titles and /or research degrees, the experience of pedagogical work, the fields of research activity, and the experience of practical work in the field of the taught academic subjects, as well as the academic subjects taught by them. While Appendix 3.2 lists the number of years of teaching experience and the number of years of practical work experience that the academic staff have, it does not specify whether any of them have conducted their research in the area of early childhood studies nor does it specify whether any of their teaching or practical experience is in this particular field. KU is advised that when assembling such data for future evaluations, it should give this more specific data.

Appendix 3.3 presents the curriculum vitae of staff. When Appendix 3.3 is analysed, it shows that very few members of staff have professional qualifications in the field of pre-school education. These include Irena Pasukyte and Rasa Brasauskiene who has also published in this area. Among others, Reda Vismantiene has participated in an EU project on preschool education and has publications in the area; Rasa Jautakyte (a music teacher) has conducted some research in preschool education and Robertas Kavolius has engaged in overseas research trips to preschool facilities in Scotland and Norway. This gives rise to concerns about the low level of staff qualified to assess the full range of subjects being taught by the students on practice.

In the course of the institutional visit, the issue of qualifications, research interests and practical experience of early childhood education, was raised with members of the teaching staff and it became clear that while some staff members, such as the teacher of Music, have had some experience of teaching in the early years, the number of staff members with experience of teaching at the preschool level is very low indeed.

Overall, EET formed the view that the level of expertise and the qualifications of the teaching staff were so limited in this area, that it would clearly be difficult for this staff to achieve the programme learning outcomes. In this context, EET noted that Paragraph 40 of the SER states that “for the implementation of the programme, researchers have been invited from 7 Departments of Klaipeda University, to create better opportunities for the training of a comprehensive pre-school education specialist”. This statement seems to be an acknowledgement of the general lack of expertise in this area.

**2.3.3** As to whether **the number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes**, Paragraph 3 of the SER had noted that the Department of CP employs 1 professor, 5 associate professors, 1 lecturer, PhD, and 3 lecturers as full-time academic staff, and 2 lecturers, PhD, and 2 assistants as part-time academic staff.

Paragraph 40 of the SER notes that 28 teachers of KU participate in the implementation of the CP study programme, including 11 teachers from the Department of Childhood Pedagogy, 4 from the Department of Psychology (PK), 3 from the Department of Social Pedagogy (SP), 5 from the Department of Educology (EK), 2 from the Department of Physical Education (KKK), 2 from the Department of English Philology, (AFK) and 1 from the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies (FKK).

Paragraph 48 of the SER notes that, while the overall numbers on the programme have shown growth from 2008 onwards, the number of staff (28) has remained static. This paragraph states that the standard ratio of teachers and students in the CP study programme is 1:12 (although it does not explain how this ratio has been calculated). From this, the SER concludes “that the ratio of the numbers of teachers and students corresponds to the maximum standard and can be considered optimal for the attainment of the intended learning outcomes”. EET considers that this is an extremely generous level of staffing and, while it might be desirable from the staff perspective, it is a ratio that is unlikely to be sustainable over time.

Paragraph 57 of the SER addresses issues in relation to staff workload, noting that by regulation of the KU senate, in the academic year 2012/2013, the workload of an academic staff member of KU who works full time is 36 hours per week, consisting of contact hours (14-10 hrs.), methodological work (preparing for contact hours, organization and control of students independent work: 12-10 hrs.) and research and /or art activity (10-16 hrs.). Paragraph 58 claims that “over the last academic year, teachers worked full-time for from 1 to 1.5 full time equivalent”. This is likely to be the result of an increase in student numbers set against a static number of staff.

This issue in regard to how the staff:student ratio was calculated was raised with the University Administration at their meeting with EET on the occasion of the institutional visit, but those present were not able to offer further clarification nor to explain why CP and the CP-EFLT programmes had the same ratios although the numbers on each programme were very different. The lack of clarity means that EET has inadequate evidence to draw any conclusion in this area.

**2.3.4** The question of whether the **teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme** is addressed in Paragraph 51 of the SER which states that “the changes in the academic staff employed in the study programme are insignificant, however, the composition has been improving in terms of quality”. The basis for this statement is elaborated upon through an explanation of the increasing levels of academic qualification of staff in Paragraph 51 which goes on to conclude that “the changes in the academic staff in the said study programme ensure its quality implementation: academic experience of the staff is developed, and researchers are integrated whose research contributes to the improvement of the study programme implementation”. However, this Paragraph does not say whether the claimed improvement in quality has been matched by any improvement in the numbers of staff possessing preschool qualifications and having experience of teaching at this level.

**2.3.5** As to whether **the higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme**, Paragraph 51 notes that “the study programme employs 4 teachers who write doctoral theses and whose

themes are directly related to the academic subjects taught by them. While this statement may be true, when the entire list of subjects taught by the academic staff is examined (Appendix 3.2), it is remarkable that the word “preschool” appears in relation to only three academic staff members.

Paragraph 54 gives details of the very supportive environment created by KU to support and encourage staff development. This begins with the procedures for tenure and includes regulations on research and studies as well as a promotions fund. Staff also have the opportunity to apply for exemption from academic work every five years for the purpose of conducting research or for scientific and professional development. In recent years, a monthly Research Forum has been organised

Paragraph 55 presents data on teachers’ professional development showing that over the past five years, 28 teachers employed in the CP study programme developed professionally in different seminars, courses, or participated in continuous training related to the study field of the CP study programme, research and academic activities, and the improvement of general competences.

Paragraph 49 details the support for engagement in international exchange programmes, listing both outgoing and incoming academics in each year since 2008, noting that the ratio of inbound and outbound teachers tends to keep at the same level: in 2008, 1:3, in 2009, 1:2, in 2010, 2:3, in 2011, 2:2, in 2012, 4:2, and in 2013, 2:2.

EET is pleased to note the supportive environment created at KU to encourage professional development and, especially, the encouragement given to developing international linkages and exchanges among staff.

**2.3.6 As to whether the teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) directly related to the study programme being reviewed,** the SER, in Paragraph 43 states that the teachers of the DCP “conduct research directly related to the CP EFLT (*sic.*) study programme under the sub-theme *Improvement of the Quality of Education in Childhood in the Lifelong Learning Context*”. Paragraph 43 goes on to say that “the members of the DCP teaching in the programme carry out research under the following subthemes: *The Quality of Social Education as a Factor of Equal Opportunities and Social Cohesion Enhancement*”.

Paragraph 43 also gives details of research conducted by the Department of Psychology (PK), the Department of Educology (EK), the Department of Physical Education (KKK) and by the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies (FKK). The research included research commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania *Opportunities of Choice in Pre-School Education in Lithuania* led by prof. dr. I. Klanienė. The research conducted in the Departments and the commissioned research is related to the improvement of the CP study programme (Paragraph 43).

Paragraph 44 gives details of research conducted by staff into the areas in which they teach and in some instances (e.g. the research of assoc.prof. dr. R. Vismantiene), this research relates to early childhood studies and pedagogy.

The SER, in Paragraph 45 and in Table 5 details the project activities in which staff are engaged. EET is pleased to note that a number of these projects are in the area of pre-school education or have a relevance to this area.

Paragraph 46 of the SER gives details of those (8) staff who are reported to be research active and who organise international conferences, publish scientific works, who have successfully

acted as academic advisors of doctoral students or have been members of the committees of doctoral studies or opponents of doctoral theses. The SER, in Paragraph 47 notes that many of the individual members of staff are reviewers of scientific publications and members of editorial boards of international and national periodical scientific publications, regularly publish the outcomes of their research in scientific articles, write monographs, study books, methodological aids, and teaching aids (see Appendix 3.3). Further information on the faculty members' involvement in international conferences, seminars and research trips is presented in Paragraph 52 in great detail. While the overall list seems at first glance to be very impressive, when analysed it shows that just 11 (eleven) such events were attended in each of the years 2011 and 2012, which is not a large number among 28 staff. Even allowing the possibility that a number of staff may have attended some events, this still seems to be quite a low level of engagement. It is also worth noting that, while there are exceptions, a great many of the conferences and themes are far removed from preschool pedagogy.

Paragraph 53 of the SER details the research trips engaged in by members of the teaching staff over recent years (from 2008) but, again, it is not clear that much of this activity related to the area of pre-school pedagogy.

**2.3.7** As the **strengths** and **weaknesses** set out for the CP-EFLT Programme are textually identical to those of the CP study programme, EET's comments on both programmes are also similar. Although staffing is largely shared, both programmes have some significant differences from each other and, consequently, EET would have expected that the analysis of strengths and weaknesses would not have been the same. The SER, in Paragraph 59, identifies three strengths:

- the CP study programme employs qualified academic staff;
- the staff are able to combine research and pedagogical activity. The teachers' scientific, expertise, research, project, and educational activity is directly related to the CP study programme;
- the majority of the academic staff are of middle age (with the average age of 50.6).

EET acknowledges the first two items as strengths but it begs to differ on the final "strength", which may well be a weakness, especially as half of the staff are aged 50 or more. EET is surprised to find (Paragraph 56) that there is not a single staff member in the 20-30 age cohort while one teacher is over 70. While EET understands the desire (expressed in Paragraph 56) to employ "promising teachers who have sufficient experience in pedagogical work and extensive academic experience", it feels that it is important that students should also be exposed to those who have very recent (or current) experience of working in pre-school settings and is of the view that this is less likely to be found among the older age cohort, unless the institution has a strong policy of re-immersing its teaching staff in preschool settings.

EET acknowledges that staff seem to meet the current legal requirements. However, EET also notes that a very small number of staff are qualified in the pre-school area and few have practical experience of working in that field. While some staff are research active, EET is surprised that the SEG has not identified the lack of qualification of staff in preschool pedagogy or the lack of staff engagement in researches in this specific field as further weaknesses.

EET sees as positive the very favourable staff: student ratio on this programme (although it is not clear on the basis for calculation). However, it also sees this as being unsustainable, even though it recognises that staff have a larger number of students than they had five years ago.

EET considers that KU offers an encouraging environment for professional development but feels that the level of engagement could be greater. Likewise, EET feels that there is good

institutional support for international mobility, but notes that the SER (Paragraph 62) acknowledges the low level of staff participation in exchange programmes as a weakness.

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

**2.4.1** As to whether **the premises for studies are adequate, both in their size and quality**, the SER, in Paragraph 60 gives an affirmative answer on this issue, stating that “the premises for studies are appropriate, and their number is sufficient”. The SER goes on to point out that, for all of its programmes, the Pedagogy Faculty of KU has 27 classrooms, including 2 with 32 computerized workplaces, 1 specialized classroom (stationary multimedia, contemporary computers with installed software programmes necessary for studies), 8 classrooms with stationary multimedia (including 4 amphitheatres), and specialized premises (for Psychological Counselling, Educational Innovations, Women’s Studies, Career Counselling Centres, etc.), methodological labs, a modern library, and a conference hall seating 50 people. Altogether, the Faculty offers 1, 220 workplaces. The SER notes that the same facilities are available to full-time and to part-time students (Paragraph 131).

In the course of its visit to KU, the EET had the opportunity to examine these facilities. The EET was especially interested in the quality of the resources available. While understanding the financial pressures that the institution has come under, EET was disappointed to note the poor condition of many of the public areas of the institution and of some of its general auditoria as well as specific shortages of resources in the ICT field.

**2.4.2** In regard to **the teaching and learning equipment (laboratory and computer equipment, consumables)**, Paragraph 61 of the SER notes the availability of a conference hall (100 places) and two classrooms (each with 250 seats) with the equipment for teleconference receiving and broadcasting, as well as noting facilities available in other Faculties of the University (namely, the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Science). The SER stresses that laboratory works, practicums, educational events are held in KU Botanical garden. All those premises are used for lectures, scientific conferences, student meetings, defence of final theses, and other studies-related events. Therefore, the SER concludes that the premises for studies are sufficient and well-equipped.

In relation to the **learning equipment**, Paragraph 62 of the SER points out that the IT infrastructure is good and that the students have access to such resources as a Smart Notebook™ 10.8, 14 multimedia, 9 copying machines, and SPSS 17.0 installed on computers. Students are provided with appropriate conditions for doing independent work assignments, free access to the Internet, licensed, the software, and an electronic KU Library catalogue ALEPH.

Having inspected the available resources and equipment, EET is satisfied that they are “adequate” but sees a need for the urgent upgrading and improvement as well as for an overall renovation of large parts of the premises.

**2.4.3** As to whether **the higher education institution has adequate arrangements for students’ practice**, Paragraph 63 of the SER points out that agreements of practice have been signed with a great range of school-kindergartens and crèche-kindergartens, some of which are specialist institutions such as the Klaipeda Vision Development Centre. The SER also states that “the educational institutions of Klaipeda City and district and Kretinga educational institutions employ qualified specialists who meet the requirements for practice mentors”. However, the SER gives no further information on the qualifications of the specialists mentioned.

The SER does not give any insight into the requirements for practice mentors. It gives no specific information as to how the practice is supervised or monitored and it fails to give any information in regard to the grading and standardisation of practices. It does not give details of the success rates or failure rates of students on this critically-important aspect of the degree programme. The issue of mentor training was raised in the Meeting with members of the SEG, one of whom said that mentor training for both primary and preschool mentors was conducted in the Teacher Education Centre and was a programme running to 160 hours. This programme was run under the auspices of the European Union. Beyond that the University did not have a training programme.

**2.4.4** The availability of **teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases)** is addressed in Paragraphs 64 to 77, inclusive, of the SER. Paragraph 64 of the SER gives an overview of all the materials available, in all faculties, of KU. Paragraph 65 notes the extent to which students of the CP programme use materials in the PF Library. The availability of serial publications and e-resources suitable for the CP study programme is addressed in Paragraph 66. Paragraph 67 notes the extent to which new databases have been made available through the main KU Library. Paragraph 68 makes note of the availability of bibliographical support tools, such as *Refworks*. Paragraph 69 gives details of the Faculty Library and of its holdings, noting that students may avail of Inter-Library lending to support their research. Paragraph 70 notes that

In the Methodological Centre of the DCP, students can get acquainted with the syllabi of the academic subjects, the accumulated specialist literature, and methodological aids; they can use didactic materials (copies, CD, e-versions, video materials, etc.). Final Theses are also stored in the Methodological Centre.

Paragraph 70 gives details of the databases, including Lithuanian databases and scientific journals, that are accessible to staff and students while Paragraph 72 lists, in considerable details the databases of scientific journals and reference publications that are available, including those offering distance access whether through computers on the KU network, or through personal computers. Paragraph 74 gives details of how new students are introduced to the Library service and its facilities while Paragraph 75 gives information on specific courses organised by the Library to meet the particular needs of students groups. Paragraphs 76 and 77 give information on European-supported projects have enabled training the renovation of premises the acquisition of learning resources and the provision of equipment needed for studies.

Overall, on the basis of the material presented in the SER, EET came to the view that the teaching materials available are adequate and reasonably accessible. However, in the course of the institutional visit, EET became very aware of the paucity of materials, especially ICT materials and other resources which the students could use pedagogically and of the need for significant further investment in resourcing this programme.

**2.4.5** In relation to the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of the study programme, the SER identifies three strengths (identical to those of the CP study programme):

- The premises for studies are appropriate and provide a sufficient number of workplaces;
- The PF has a contemporary library, access to databases is provided;
- Practice sites are appropriate for comprehensive student practices.

EET considers that the first of these is nothing more than what should be expected of a University offering a programme such as this. For this reason, it does not see this as being a **strength**. Likewise, EET considers that having a contemporary library which provides access to

databases is what could be expected. In regard to the third claimed strength, EET does not feel that the evidence presented in the SER and in its Appendices is such as to convince it that the practice sites provide anything more than a basic training opportunity, particularly as little effort is made to ensure that students experience the widest possible range of practice settings.

The SER presents only a single **weakness** but two **Actions for Improvement**

- A shortage of funds for the premises renovation and scientific and methodological resources.

**Actions for improvement:**

- To encourage students to make use of the opportunities provided by databases;
- To look for new possibilities for the updating and improval of the infrastructure.

EET is disappointed to note that the single weakness identified is not a weakness in the study programme under review, but rather an institutional issue, and EET would much prefer if those preparing the SER had identified weaknesses in the study programme, about which the Faculty might be able to do something!

Having inspected the available resources and equipment, EET is satisfied that they are “adequate” but just so. Likewise, on the basis of the material presented in the SER, EET came to the view that the teaching materials available are adequate and reasonably accessible. While understanding the financial pressures that the institution has come under, EET was disappointed to note the poor condition of many of the public areas of the institution and of some of its general auditoria as well as specific shortages of resources which are impacting negatively on the CP study programme. In the course of the institutional visit, EET became very aware of the paucity of materials, especially ICT materials and other resources which the students should be using pedagogically and sees an urgent need for upgrading and improvement in these areas, as well as for an overall renovation of large parts of the premises.

## ***2.5 Study process and student assessment***

**2.5.1** As to whether **the admission requirements are well-founded**, this is addressed in Paragraph 79 of the SER. Based on the description of the process given here, EET is satisfied that the process seems to be well organised in relation to initial entry to the programme. While Table 15 and Paragraph 136 note that student numbers have been bolstered by the admission of students directly to the senior years of studies, the SER gives no rationale for this. Neither does it indicate the kinds of criteria that apply to such admissions. In the absence of any information on such admissions, EET is very concerned about this process.

EET is somewhat surprised as to why a competition for entry into early childhood pedagogy should give priority to just three subjects of the secondary school curriculum (Lithuanian language, Foreign Language and Mathematics) and it wonders if there are not other subjects that might be more appropriate and useful to a professional commencing on a career in early childhood studies. EET appreciates that the issue of entry requirements is not entirely in the hands of KK but is partially dependant on other bodies, such as the Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools (LAMA BPO) and the Lithuanian Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Nevertheless, EET would have welcomed a rational explanation of why KU considers these subjects to be appropriate. EET also suggests that it might be fruitful ground for research to investigate whether these subjects are a reliable basis for selecting pre-school educators.



Paragraph 79 also notes that passing a motivation test is also now (since 2010) a requirement for entry for all students other than those who are self-paying. Paragraph 80 and Table 6 indicate that there has been some improvement in the average score for admission in recent years (no scores are available for 2009 or 2010, because there was no intake of full-time students in those years). Table 7 and Paragraph 81 highlight the large decrease in the number applicants, from 130 in 2008 to 81 in 2012 with the numbers of those actually admitted decreasing from 15 to 10 in the same period while the number of state-funded places has dropped from 12 to 4. In 2013, according to information given on the occasion of the institutional visit to KU, there were just three state-funded places with thirteen self-funded students admitted to the programme giving a total of 16 students.

The SER address what it calls the “**dynamics of students’ academic record**” in Paragraph 83, examining the academic grades of students during the four years of the programme. EET notes that no such data is presented in the SER in relation to the Practice.

In the case of part-time students, Paragraph 134 of the SER notes that there has been some improvement of competition scores since 2008 (cf. also Table 13) while there has also been a very significant drop in the numbers applying (Table 14 and Paragraph 135). With only eleven (11) students admitted and only a single State-funded place in 2012, it is clear that this programme also faces real challenges, if it is to survive, on both financial and numerical grounds.

**Table 3** The number of students admitted to CP (F/T and P/T)

Year of admission	Overall number of students (F/T+PT) (Paragraph 48)	The number of full-time students admitted (Table 7)	The number of part-time students admitted (Table14)
2012	104 (35+69)	10	11
2011	86 (29+57)	16	13
2010	55 (13+42)	-	9
2009	42 (14+28)	-	15
2008	28 (15+13)	15	13
	<b>Totals</b>	41	61

EET considers that for both the Full-time and Part-time variants of the programme, the levels of demand and of admission as well as the levels of state support inevitably give rise to questions about the financial sustainability and viability of the CP programme.

**2.5.2** The SER does not seem to directly address the issue of whether **the organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes**. Instead, it seems to address it indirectly by talking about the number of the admitted students and those who successfully graduated from the study programme.

Paragraphs 82 and 83 identify the main reasons for non-completion (drop-out) from the programme with Paragraph 83 stating that the principal reasons for drop-out over the period (2008 to 2012) were personal including maternity leaves, etc. Paragraph 82 of the SER gives specific detail, noting that

in 2008, 15 students started the studies, and in 2012, 11 graduated (73%) (see Table 8). Over the analyzed period, the dropout was observed due to several reasons: 1) due to personal reasons (5 cases), 2) due to maternity leave (2 cases), and 3) due to poor academic record (3 cases).

While this gives a total of 10 F/T students who have dropped out over the period 2008 to 2012, Table 8 indicates only two students as having dropped out! On the part-time variant of the programme there is a reference to three students dropping out, one of which was due to a bad academic record but it is not stated if this student had failed or had voluntarily withdrawn from the programme (Paragraph 136). In the course of the meeting with the SEGs of both programmes, it was stated that no student had failed. EET has difficulty in reconciling these numerical inconsistencies.

**2.5.3** The extent to which **students are encouraged to participate in research, artistic and applied research activities** is outlined in Paragraph 84 of the SER which tells us that “students participate in research by writing course papers and the final theses”. However, most surprisingly, this paragraph then goes on to describe the research activities of students on the CP EFTL programme, although there is one extra sentence relating to the manner in which students of the CP programme had made presentations at a conference on the *Implementation of the Pre-School Age Child Rights Protection in the Context of Education Quality Expression* on 31 May 2011 as well as taking part in and presenting at a conference on *Student Research Aspects in the Study Process* held by Zemaitija College.

There is no indication that staff members involve the students in their own researches or that they ever co-produce pieces of research with the students.

**2.5.4** As to whether **students have opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes**, the SER, in Paragraph 96 notes that KU has signed exchange agreements with universities in fifteen countries. Paragraph 97 gives details of the institutional support and encouragement for student mobility.

In the period under review, Paragraph 96 and Table 10 indicate that eight students of the CP study programme went to two universities: three (3) going to University College Lillebaelt (Denmark) in 2010/2011 and five (5) going to Nord-Trondelag University College (Norway) in 2012/2013 (cf. Table 10). A further four (4) students had the opportunity to do a practice in Norway within the terms of a European project. In the meeting with the SEGs, it was clarified that there had been five outgoing students of the CP programme who went for practice, while a three (3) students had gone on an ERASMUS exchange.

Staff at KU have made a range of 9 courses available in the English language, as part of the CP programme. However the number of incoming students remain small, as indicated by Table 11 showing just two source universities (one in Poland and one in Spain) from which a total of three inbound students have arrived.

EET notes, with concern, that identical data is presented in Table 11 in relation to incoming students for both the CP programme and the CP ELFT programme. Furthermore, the text of Paragraph 99 of the CP SER very clearly states that the incoming students were students of CP-EFLT. If this is correct, then they have been students of CP study programme. EET is very unhappy to find evidence which puts a question over the accuracy of both reports.

**2.5.5** In regard to the issue of whether **the higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support**, Paragraph 85 of the SER indicates that academic support commences at the first week of studies. Paragraph 86 details the systems for information dissemination, including the publication of timetables and other materials on the website of the University. Paragraph 87 adds some detail in relation to timetabled time for consultations with

faculty members, indicating that the consultation may be in person, individually or in groups, by e-mail, or in virtual environment, etc.

Paragraph 88 outlines the procedures for repeating a course or retaking an examination. The special arrangements which may apply in cases such as those of illness, pregnancy, or baby care are also noted in Paragraph 89. The availability and work of the career advisory service (since 2003) is noted in Paragraph 89 of the SER.

Paragraph 90 gives an overview of the socio-psychological supports which are available to students and also of the financial incentives and other supports that are available.

Students and alumni both expressed satisfaction that there was good relations between teachers and students and that, whenever they had problems or difficulties, it was easy to seek support from a staff member.

**2.5.6** Paragraph 91 of the SER addresses the issue of **the assessment system of students' performance**. It notes that the intended learning outcomes are at the centre of the educational enterprise and it gives an overview of how assessment is conducted using a ten-point criteria-based scale and a cumulative grade. However, the EET noted a great lack of information in regards to the mode of assessment and the criteria for assessment of the practice, as well as about the persons who are responsible for grading this element of the programme.

EET noted that a listing of mentors' grades for the Fourth Practice of the Full-time CP programme in 2012 indicated that each of the ten students listed had been awarded a grade of "10" by the mentor! In relation to the part-time programme, seven of the students had received a "10", one had been given a "9" while two had been awarded "8" by the mentors. EET was astonished by such limited use of the grading scale by the mentors. KU should investigate why mentors are so reluctant to use the entire scale. Are they afraid that the award of a grade lower than "7" or "8" would reflect negatively on themselves and their capacity to offer guidance to the students?

Paragraph 115 of the SER states that "during practices, mentors are the heads of the practice; after the practice is finished, it is discussed in common meetings of mentors, tutors, and students". This sentence raises a question about the role and responsibilities of the University's own staff in relation to the practice, most especially in regard to the grading of students. This view is reinforced by Paragraph 107 which states that the "Director of Klaipeda kindergarten Žiogelis A. Šereivienė is in charge of the regular practice improvement". While A. Šereivienė, who was also a member of the SEG, is clearly a committed and very involved stakeholder, it seems extraordinary to EET that the University should have outsourced the responsibility for practice improvement rather than giving this responsibility to a senior member of its own administration (such as the Dean, Vice Dean or Head of Practices).

The module description on pp.179 to 182 of Appendix 3.1 sets out the following grid for the grading of the final practice.

**Table 3: Grading of the Final (independent) Practice**

Type of assignment	Theme(s) No.	Total hours	Share in the final grade, %
Case analysis	7	40	10
Diary	8	30	5
Oral illustrated report.	10	20	10
Individual work	3	120	10
Poster presentation	4.2	20	5
Individual project	4.3	60	20
Project	5	70	25
Group (team) project	6	40	15
<b>Total:</b>	-	400	100

EET is amazed to find that, on this grid, the preponderance of the grade is awarded for reports, projects and diaries with a mere 10% of the grade being dedicated to the actual work of the individual in the practice setting, despite the fact that, at 120 hours, this element of the work has taken 30% of the student's practice time and despite the fact that this is the professional work that the graduates will be expected to be capable of delivering throughout their professional careers. In relation to this critical 10%, no clear indication is given as to who is responsible for awarding this grade or what criteria are applied other than the general statement, appearing in all these modules, in relation to "A ten-point criteria-based scale and a cumulative assessment system are applied" (cf. p. 186 of Appendix 3.1).

The role which the University and its staff play in grading practices was raised in the course of EET's meeting with Administrative Staff. EET was told that the role of the Head of Practices in the Faculty was to organise the selection of kindergartens and to conclude agreements with practice sites. Practice tutors were appointed within the Department. The Vice Dean pointed out that after each practice there are discussions between the mentors and the University tutors/supervisors. The Vice Dean informed EET that part of the final grade is written by the mentor but that ultimately the grade is decided by the tutor from the University. This was confirmed in the meeting with members of the SEG who added that the process used was that of cumulative assessment. The University supervisor sets tasks for the student, such as the keeping of a diary which is assessed by the supervisor. It was noted that there are two kinds of supervisor, one of them being a general tutor and the other being in charge of a subject specialism. It was pointed out that every subject on the programme had its own tutor who visited to see lessons. It seemed to EET that this generated a very large number of visits by University staff, something that would be entirely unnecessary if a larger proportion of the academic staff of the University had teaching qualifications at pre-school level as they would all then be capable of supervising the full range of subject areas.

In summary, EET is deeply concerned at the approach to the practice outlined in the four practice modules and feels that the structure of these modules does little to ensure that graduates reach the level that would be expected at the award of a Level 6 degree in Childhood Pedagogy. In particular, EET is concerned that only a portion of the grade is for the actual classroom teaching of the student and at the fact that all students seem to get extremely high grades.

The SER gives no information in relation to the grading results of these modules, collectively or individually, over a period of years. It gives no indication of what percentage of students attain the highest grade levels or of the numbers receiving lower grade levels (or even failing). This makes it very difficult for EET to "take the pulse" of this aspect of KU's activities in this field. It also clearly indicates that there is a lack of transparency in relation to this aspect of the work.

Paragraph 36 of the SER presents the requirements in relation to the Final Thesis and its assessment, noting that

The themes of the final theses of the CP study programme are in compliance with the learning outcomes of the study programme. The final thesis shall disclose student's research competences: the ability to collect and analyze the research data, to project pedagogical research, to choose an appropriate research strategy, to use different sources of information, to collect theoretical and empirical material, to analyze, interpret, and summarize it, etc.

Similarly, Paragraph 92 gives detail on the assessment of the Final Thesis.

The final thesis shall be assessed, given the principal criteria that reflect its quality: the quality of the structural parts (the introduction, the analytical part, the final part, and the bibliography); the harmony of the aims, objectives, methods, the ways of analysis, and the conclusions of the paper; the novelty of the sources of literature and the systemic character of their analysis; a fluent description of the empirical part and the analysis and interpretation of the outcomes; and the transparency of the conclusions and their compliance with the aims of the thesis.

Paragraph 92 outlines the work of the Defence Board. Paragraph 37 also noted that the Final Thesis had to

be defended in a public meeting against the KU-Rector-approved Board. The thesis shall be reviewed by one reviewer with the academic title of no lower than lecturer. .... The decision on the grade for the Final Thesis shall be made by the Final Theses Defence Board. The assessment criteria are laid out in *Descriptor of General Requirements for KU Students' Independent Papers and Art Works* (approved by Resolution No.11-56, 09-04-2010 of the KU Senate) and are known by students in advance.

EET notes that (Paragraph 128) the requirements for the Final Theses of part-time students are identical to those of full-time students.

EET notes that great attention that is paid to the assessment of the "Final Thesis". It also notes that the "Final Thesis" carries a weighting of 12 credits (Paragraph 23). The "Independent Practice of Pedagogical Work", which is the Final Practice, carries 15 credits. The former relates to the student's capacity to conduct research. The latter relates to the student's capacity to do the professional work that they will be expected to do every day. Far greater care seems to be given to the "Final Thesis", to its defence and to its assessment than seems to be the case for the Final Practice, even though the latter carries a heavier credit weighting. The EET considers that this imbalance should be addressed.

In regard to the Final Theses, Paragraph 94 states that the average grade over the assessed period was 8.55. However, when the list of "Final Theses (Full Time) of the Childhood Pedagogy Study Programme" in Appendix 3.4 is examined and when the 230 marks apportioned to the 28 students is averaged, the average grade comes to 8.2, rather than to 8.55.

EET was pleased to note from Appendix 3.4 that most (although not all) of the Final Theses had a focus on preschool or kindergarten education or on children of that age. In the course of its visit to KU, the EET had time to examine a range of Final Theses. It noted that many presented little evidence of real research beyond the use of questionnaires and/or surveys. There was little

effort to relate the findings of the students' work to the literature survey, either in relation to where there was agreement or difference. There was inadequate discussion of the findings and, in virtually, all cases, a single page in which "Conclusions" were presented. Large parts of the Thesis were filled with bar-charts and graphs detailing the results of the surveys or questionnaires. None of the theses examined detailed the word-count of the document.

Paragraph 93 of the SER highlights the importance of helping students to assess themselves, arguing that the kind of assessment system that operates in KU "enables teacher to assess student achievements in a holistic and objective way, and students to assess themselves, and complies to the attainment of the intended learning outcomes of the undergraduate study programme of CP". During its visit to KU, EET found that some staff and very many students were unclear about how the practice was assessed.

In the course of the institutional visit to KU, EET raised the question of how students were prepared for their work on the Final Thesis. Staff members told EET that there was a course in Research Methodology. In the detailed list of subjects in Appendix 3.1, EET noted that a number of programmes, such as those in Psychology ("Basics of Psychology" and "Child's Psychology") and "Introduction to Study of Childhood Pedagogy", included elements of research methodology while one entire module, entitled "Pedagogical Research", was dedicated to this area: Despite the fact that the module summary included reference to research ethics, EET could find no evidence that students had addressed this area in the Final Thesis. Students seemed to be unaware of the importance of reflecting on the intrusion which their research might make into the life of an individual or of a family when they were dealing with sensitive issues or with vulnerable persons. KU does not appear to have put any process in place under which students (or staff) might have to obtain clearance for conducting research of this nature or which might place limitations on the research for the protection of those involved.

EET is satisfied that, with the exception of the assessment of the various practices and, most especially, in relation to the assessment of the Final Practice, on which it has commented above, the assessment systems for the CP programme seems to be adequate and publicly available.

Overall, EET felt that the Final Theses examined were following a very fixed formula, introducing students only to a narrow range of research skills. EET is of the view that this type of undergraduate work might, more properly, be given a title such as "Research Essay" and should not be given the title "Thesis" which might more properly be reserved for the kinds of research that could be expected at Masters or Doctoral levels. EET strongly recommends that the Faculty consider the potential benefits of such changed nomenclature which would help students to see their research work from a broader perspective.

**2.5.7** As to whether the **professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme providers' expectations**, Paragraph 101 notes that over the assessed period, the CP study programme had been completed by 11 students (one student for personal reasons has not sought employment) and that

Four graduates successfully work in the system of education: one in Kretinga pre-school educational institution, others work abroad, and five graduates work in other fields. One graduate continues in the graduate studies.

This sentence seems to mean that only a single graduate is working in a pre-school setting. In the course of the institutional visit to KU, it was confirmed that this was true and that the statement was accurate, although it was also pointed out that the situation had improved since the SER had been prepared.

**2.5.8** The SER presents four claimed **strengths**. The first of these relates to the introduction of the motivation test which has led to applications from more motivated students. As this test was introduced at the behest of the Ministry for Higher Education and Science and has had a similar impact on all educational programmes, it can hardly be presented as a particular strength of this programme. In regard to the second **strength** (more students become active in mobility programmes), the numbers of outgoing students on this programme are so small that this claim can have limited validity. The third claimed **strength** simply notes the existence of academic and social support. EET sees this as an essential element for any such university programme and has seen no evidence to support the claim that the level of support available at KU is such as to justify calling this a particular strength of this programme, more than any other programme in the same or other universities. Finally, in relation to the fourth claimed strength, whereas the SER presents the assessment system for the Final Thesis as a particular strength, EET has not seen any evidence to show that KU is pre-eminent among its peers in this regard.

In regard to the only **weakness** identified, EET does not feel that the SER presented sufficient evidence to explain why the implementation of the current procedures in relation to academic misconduct should be more active.

EET is somewhat surprised to find that the proposed **Actions for Improvement** bear no relationship to the identified weakness and, consequently, EET feels that the SER has not presented the evidence to explain why these particular actions have been selected as the basis for improving this programme. EET notes the inappropriate use of “Copy & Paste” here again, most injudiciously in respect of the final proposed ‘Action for Improvement’ which clearly relates to the improvement of the CP-EFLT programme and has no relevance for the current CP study programme.

From its perspective, EET feels that the admission arrangements are generally well organised. However on the negative side, it wonders about the arrangements and criteria for admission of students directly onto the later years of the programme.

The EET acknowledges that the motivation test has had a generally positive impact on competition scores across Lithuania, including at KU, but it notes the decrease in applicant numbers and wonders if, as a test, it is as good as it ought to be for entry into a programme of (early) childhood pedagogy. As noted elsewhere, EET is particularly concerned about the assessment regime in relation to the practices. Finally, EET recommends that the “Final Thesis” might more appropriately be called the “Research Essay”, thereby reserving the word “thesis” for the more extensive researches conducted at Masters and Doctoral levels.

## **2.6 Programme management**

**2.6.1** As to whether the **responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated**, Paragraph 17 notes that the study programme is “annually reviewed and revised, given the observation outcomes and the student, stakeholder, and academic staff recommendations”. However, Paragraph 17 does not say who is responsible for this work.

Paragraph 32 of the SER notes that, once in every two years, the Department in charge of a study programme must, under KU Regulations, “revise the content of the academic subjects and its compliance with the latest scientific achievements and the changes in the labor market”. This Paragraph also notes that a KU Attesting Committee is formed which “assesses the themes of the subjects, the volume, etc., as well as their compliance with the changes in the study programme,

the latest scientific achievements, and the intended learning outcomes, and then attests the academic subjects”. Paragraph 108 also notes that such reviews occur every two years. Paragraph 109 lists the various regulations and documents that guide this practice, although there is no specific reference to the role of a Quality Committee or of a Quality Office in this process and it appears from the subsequent paragraphs that this is primarily a matter for the Department (DCP). The functions and responsibilities of the Department in this regard are detailed in Paragraph 106 which makes it clear that the DCP and its Head are directly responsible for the content of the undergraduate study programme of CP and its implementation. Paragraph 107 repeats that the DCP is in charge of the programme implementation, but this Paragraph adds that there is also a CP Study Programme Committee, of which the membership and responsibilities are listed.

**2.6.2** The question of whether **information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed** is addressed in at various points in the SER. Paragraph 17 makes mention of surveys being regularly conducted, it does not specify who is responsible for conducting these surveys. Neither does it detail the range of data and information that is collected. Paragraph 110 notes that “after the session is over, students are asked to fill in a questionnaire of a general character on the organisation of the study programme”.

Paragraph 111 points out that teachers “participate in the programme assessment and improvement by initiating student opinion surveys, taking an active part in the CPD meetings and in internal and external self-assessments, by initiating meetings with colleagues and making proposals on the programme improvement to the Head of the Department, the Dean’s Office, or the Faculty Council, by participating in the work of the PF Academic Subjects Attesting Committee, etc.”.

In the course of the visit to KU, students were unable to give any example of a programme modification that had been made on the basis of their feedback. Also during the visit, EET noted that the quality system at KU is being upgraded and that there are plans for introducing a Quality Office as well as for the preparation of a Quality Manual for the University.

**2.6.3** In relation to the extent to which **the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme**, a number of paragraphs (108-118) confirm that this occurs. Paragraph 118 lists the various sources of information that are used for quality improvement as being “research experience of the academic staff; practical, pedagogical, and managerial experience; relations with stakeholders (partners); response to the challenges of the educational and social changes, financial resources, the needs of the students, etc.”

As noted above, EET was unable to obtain any evidence of programme changes having been made on foot of feedback from students or from alumni.

**2.6.4** Paragraphs 112-115 of the SER address the issue of whether **the evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders**. Paragraph 112 describes the ways in which **students** are involved, as early as Semester 1, through a student survey conducted by the Department. Paragraph 113 notes that the students may also organise their own surveys in relation to teacher performance. Students bring their issues in regard to other organisation or assessment of studies to the Head of Department. Students are also represented on a range of University bodies.



Paragraph 114 notes that there is a role for **graduates** and **employers** in the process of programme review and renewal while Paragraph 115 gives some detail on the extent to which the DCP teachers maintain close relations with employers and professional associations. It notes that stakeholders act as collaborators in the organization and assessment of student practical activity and notes that stakeholders are involved in research when students work on their Final Thesis. It was also reported that stakeholders take part in the KU PF-organized conferences.

**2.6.5** As to whether and to what extent **the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient**, this issue seems to be addressed in Paragraph 116 of the SER which states that “the effectiveness of the CP study programme (self-) assessment processes and outcomes is based on” four items. In summary, these are detailed in Paragraph 116, as the writing of the Final Theses, staff involvement in programme updating, and the willingness to respond to the views of employers and stakeholders, all of which lead to programme improvement. However, there is little, here or elsewhere, to show that KU has robust systems in place to underpin internal quality assurance. There is no reference to a Quality Office. Indeed, it is not clear from the documentation who is ultimately responsible for the quality control function. There is no evidence that the institution has a quality control manual to guide staff. No examples have been given of the training on offer to staff in this field.

In the course of its visit to KU, EET raised the issue of responsibility for the Quality Assurance function with members of the University’s Administration. The Dean stated that both the Dean and the Vice-Dean are responsible for Quality Assurance and that each programme, including this one, has its own Self-Assessment Committee. The Dean also pointed out that at the University, there is a Committee for Quality Assurance which is responsible for reviewing all programmes. Under the terms of an EU-funded project, they are currently taking steps to create a Quality Office. They already have some documentation which describes quality and, during the next year, it is intended to create a Quality Manual for the University.

**2.6.6** The SER (Paragraph 119) lists two **strengths** relating to programme review and to the programme management system. Whereas, EET acknowledges that both of these are accurate description of what happens, EET does not consider that they are so well done as to be considered **strengths**. EET sees, as a positive, the biennial reviews of the programme. However, it also considers that there could be greater considerably clarity about the individuals and bodies who are responsible for quality management and assurance processes.

In relation to the single **weakness** listed, EET is somewhat surprised by the admission that “the opportunities of stakeholder participation in the process of programme assessment and improvements have not been sufficiently exploited”. This arises because of the frequent statements earlier in the SER (in Paragraphs 111 to 118) to the effect that stakeholders play a key role in programme assessment and improvement. Indeed, EET has seen, as a positive, the reported level of involvement of students, graduates and employers in this process.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

EET recommends that KU give careful consideration to the title of the CP programme so as to clarify the age cohort to which it is addressed. Titles such as the “Pedagogy of Early Childhood Education and Care” or the “Pedagogy of Early Years Education” might be more appropriate.

EET recommends that consideration be given to changing the name of the “Final Thesis” to the “Research Essay” or “Final Research Dissertation”, that it be based on word count and that students be encouraged to move beyond surveys and questionnaires in conducting their research.

EET recommends that consideration be given to rebranding the module “Final Work of Pedagogical Studies” (Registraton No.: 263) as the “Student Teaching Portfolio” which might later become the basis for the Teacher’s Professional Development Portfolio.

EET recommends that strong support be given by KU for the promotion of a quality culture, including the establishment of a Quality Office, the preparation and publication of a Quality Manual and the clarification of lines of responsibility for Quality issues.

EET recommends that KU consider what further steps need to be taken to ensure that those delivering the CP programme are themselves qualified to work with the 0-7 age-group and have significant and recent experience of working at that level.

EET strongly recommends a fundamental review of the role of the practice within the CP programme, most especially in regard to its length, the role of the University Tutors/supervisors and of the institutional mentors in its assessment, the diversity of settings to which each individual student is exposed, the standards that should obtain and the manner in which the grading (using the full range of available grades) is standardised across settings, supervisors and mentors.

#### **IV. SUMMARY**

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each programme evaluation area

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

EET sees as a positive feature the fact that the programme aims are generally clear. A further positive element is to be found in the awareness of labour market demands which are informed by relatively recent data. EET considers the name “Childhood Pedagogy” to be positive. However, because the period of ‘childhood’ is long, it feels that this name should be further clarified, possibly using a term such as “Early Childhood” or “Early Years”, accompanied by a more specific statement of the ages of the ultimate target population of this degree. On the negative end of the spectrum, EET also considers that there is some lack of clarity as to whether the person qualifying from the programme is to be considered a “pedagogue” or something more than that. EET is concerned that some of the statements in the SER about the settings in which the graduates may work seem to take them far beyond the sharp focus on becoming a pre-school educator that is set out in the programme aims.

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

On the positive side, EET welcomes the space made for “General University Subjects” although it is not convinced that the particular subjects chosen are the most appropriate for this programme. EET is also pleased to note that mentors are required to be trained, although it could not find evidence that this is being done currently for newer educators.

EET was concerned that there was a lack of technological equipment at KU and to note that many schools have a higher level of digital resources. EET was especially concerned that there was no evidence of the preparation of students for using Information and Technological Communications (ICT) resources in a **pedagogical** manner (for games, pre-mathematical activities and pre-reading exercises, etc.).

EET is somewhat disappointed that there seems to be little awareness at KU of the weakness of the CP programme from the perspective of the place and role in the degree of the practical work, its supervision, its assessment and its overall importance within a professional qualification.

EET is very concerned at the approach to the practice outlined in the four practice modules and feels that the structure of these modules does little to ensure that graduates reach the level that would be expected at the award of a Level 6 degree in Childhood Pedagogy. EET is concerned that only a portion of the grade is for the actual classroom teaching of the student and at the fact that all students spend so little time in actual teaching situations.

EET is deeply concerned that early childhood practitioners are graduating from Lithuanian universities with only 120 hours of front-line experience when other countries require between 11 and 30 weeks of such experience. EET considers that the inadequacy of the practice length needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### ***2.3 Staff***

EET acknowledges that staff seem to meet the current legal requirements. However, EET also notes that only a small number of staff are qualified in the pre-school area and few have practical experience of working in that field. While some staff are research active, EET finds that few have a focus, in their research, on the area of pre-school education.

EET sees as positive the very favourable staff: student ratio on this programme (although it is not clear on the basis for calculation). However, it also sees this as being unsustainable, even though it recognises that staff have a larger number of students than they had five years ago.

EET considers that KU offers an encouraging environment for professional development but feels that the level of engagement could be greater. Likewise, EET feels that there is good institutional support for international mobility, but notes that the SER (Paragraph 59) acknowledges the low level of staff participation in exchange programmes as a weakness.

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

Having inspected the available resources and equipment, EET is satisfied that they are “adequate”. Likewise, on the basis of the material presented in the SER, EET came to the view that the teaching materials available are adequate and reasonably accessible. While understanding the financial pressures that the institution has come under, EET was disappointed to note the poor condition of many of the public areas of the institution and of some of its general auditoria as well as specific shortages of resources which are impacting negatively on the CP study programme. In the course of the institutional visit, EET became very aware of the paucity of materials, especially ICT materials and other resources which the students should be using pedagogically and sees an urgent need for upgrading and improvement in these areas, as well as for an overall renovation of large parts of the premises.

### ***2.5 Study process and student assessment***

From its perspective, EET feels that the admission arrangements are generally well organised. However on the negative side, it wonders about the arrangements and criteria for admission of students directly onto the later years of the programme.

The EET acknowledges that the motivation test has had a generally positive impact on competition scores across Lithuania, including at KU, but it notes the decrease in applicant numbers and wonders if, as a test, it is as good as it ought to be for entry into a programme of (early) childhood pedagogy. It suggests research into this area.

EET is particularly concerned about the assessment regime in relation to the practices. EET is concerned at the relatively low level of staff qualified to assess the range of subjects being taught by the students on practice. In particular, EET is concerned that only a portion of the grade is for the actual classroom teaching of the student and at the fact that all students seem to get extremely high grades.

## ***2.6 Programme management***

One positive feature in relation to programme management rests in the fact that academic staff of the University maintain close relations with students and alumni, with employers and professional associations. Likewise, on a positive note, EET noted that the quality system at KU is being upgraded and that there are plans for introducing a Quality Office as well as for the preparation of a Quality Manual for the University. On the other hand, EET considers that there is a lack of clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities for quality matters. Quality also suffers from the fact that students and alumni were unable in instance cases of programme modification on foot of suggestions made by these stakeholders.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Childhood pedagogy* (state code – 612X11002) at Klaipeda University is given positive evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	2
4.	Material resources	2
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	2
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	2
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>12</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:  
Team leader:

Dr. Gillian Lesley Scott Hilton

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Prof. dr. Peadar Cremin

Prof. dr. Kirsti Karila

Tatjana Kriliuvienė

Rūta Bikulčiūtė

&lt;...&gt;

**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Klaipėdos universiteto studijų programa *Vaikystės pedagogika* (valstybinis kodas – 612X11002) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	2
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	2
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	2
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>12</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**

Kiekvienos programos vertinimo srities teigiami ir neigiami kokybės aspektai

**2.1. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai**

EG mano, kad iš esmės aiškūs programos tikslai yra teigiamas bruožas. Kitas teigiamas aspektas įžvelgiamas darbo rinkos poreikių supratime, kuris yra paremtas palyginti naujais duomenimis. EG mano, kad pavadinimas „Vaikystės pedagogika“ yra pozityvus. Kita vertus, „vaikystės“ periodas yra ilgas, todėl manoma, kad šis pavadinimas turėtų būti patikslintas, galbūt naudojant tokį terminą kaip „Ankstyvoji vaikystė“ arba „Ankstyvieji metai“ ir nurodant dar tikslesnį amžių, į kurį ši programa yra nukreipta. Žvelgiant iš neigiamos pusės, EG mano, kad nėra visiškai aišku, ar programą baigęs asmuo turėtų būti laikomas „pedagogu“ ar kitu didesnę kvalifikaciją turinčiu specialistu. EG yra susirūpinusi, kad kai kurie Savianalizės suvestinės teiginiai apie

aplinkas, kuriose gali dirbti absolventai, apima daug daugiau nei programos tiksluose nurodytas aiškus siekis tapti ikimokyklinio ugdymo pedagogu.

## **2.2 Programos sandara**

Žvelgiant iš teigiamos pusės, EG pritaria „Bendriesiems universitetinių studijų dalykams“, tačiau nėra įsitikinusi, kad tam tikri pasirinkti dalykai yra patys tinkamiausi šiai programai. Taip pat EG malonu pažymėti, kad yra reikalaujama, jog mentoriai būtų apmokyti, tačiau negalėjo rasti įrodymų, kad tai būtų daroma šiuo metu turint omenyje naujus pedagogus.

EG yra susirūpinusi, kad KU trūksta techninės įrangos, ir pažymi, kad dauguma mokyklų turi aukštesnio lygio skaitmeninius išteklius. EG ypatingai susirūpino, kad nėra jokių įrodymų, jog studentai yra parengti **pedagogiškai** naudotis informacinių ir komunikacinių technologijų (IKT) resursais (žaidimais, ikimatematiniiais užsiėmimais, pratimais iki išmokstant skaityti ir t. t.).

EG kiek nusivylė, nes atrodo, jog KU trūksta supratimo apie VP programos silpnąją pusę, turint omenyje praktinio darbo vietą ir svarbą programoje, jo stebėjimą, vertinimą ir bendrą svarbą profesinės kvalifikacijos srityje.

EG labai susirūpinusi dėl praktikos traktavimo, kuri išdėstyta keturiuose praktikos moduluose, ir mano, kad šių modulių struktūra mažai pasitarnauja užtikrinant, kad absolventai pasiektų tokį lygį, kurio būtų galima tikėtis suteikiant vaikystės pedagogikos 6 lygio kvalifikaciją. EG susirūpinusi dėl to, kad tik dalis vertinimo yra skiriama už studento faktinį mokymą klasėje, ir dėl to, kad visi studentai tiek mažai laiko praleidžia tikrose mokymo situacijose.

EG kelia nerimą tai, kad ankstyvosios vaikystės specialistai pabaigia Lietuvos universitetus turėdami vos 120 valandų mokymo patirties, kai kitose šalyse reikalaujama nuo 11 iki 30 savaičių tokios patirties. EG mano, kad praktikos trukmės nepakankamumo klausimo turėtų būti imtasi skubos tvarka.

## **2.3 Personalas**

EG pripažįsta, kad personalas atitinka esamus teisinius reikalavimus. Tačiau EG taip pat pažymi, kad tik maža dalis personalo yra kvalifikuoti ikimokyklinio ugdymo specialistai ir tik keli turi praktinės darbo patirties šioje srityje. Dalis personalo aktyviai vykdo mokslinius tyrimus, tačiau EG pastebėjo, kad tik nedidelė jo dalis savo tyrimuose akcentuoja ikimokyklinį ugdymą.

Labai palankų dėstytojų ir studentų santykį šioje programoje EG laiko pozityviu aspektu (nors, pagal apskaičiavimus, jis nėra visai aiškus). Taip pat EG šį aspektą laiko nepastoviu, nors ir pripažįsta, kad personalui tenka didesnis studentų skaičius nei prieš penkerius metus.

EG mano, kad KU siūlo skatinančią aplinką profesiniam tobulėjimui, tačiau įsitraukimas galėtų būti didesnis. Taip pat EG nuomone, universitetas remia tarptautinį mobilumą, tačiau reikėtų pažymėti, jog savianalizės suvestinėje (59 paragrafas) personalo įsitraukimo į mainų programas aktyvumo trūkumas pripažįstamas kaip silpnybė.

#### ***2.4 Materialieji ištekliai***

Išnagrinėjusi prieinamus išteklius ir įrangą, EG liko patenkinta, kad šie yra „pakankami“. Taip pat, remiantis savianalizės suvestinėje pateikta medžiaga, EG gali teigti, kad turima mokymo medžiaga yra adekvati ir gana prieinama. Turint omenyje įstaigos patiriamus finansinius sunkumus, EG buvo liūdna pažymėti, kad daugelis įstaigos viešųjų erdvių ir kai kurios bendrosios auditorijos yra prastos būklės, taip pat trūksta tam tikrų specifinių resursų. Visa tai daro neigiamą poveikį VP studijų programai. Per vizitą įstaigoje EG pastebėjo reikmenų, ypač IKT, ir kitų resursų, kuriuos studentai turėtų pedagogiškai naudoti, trūkumą bei būtinybę skubiai modernizuoti ir pagerinti šias sritis. Taip pat daugeliui patalpų reikalinga renovacija.

#### ***2.5 Studijų procesas ir studentų vertinimas***

Iš savo perspektyvos EG pažymi, kad priėmimo tvarka iš esmės yra gerai organizuota, tačiau išvelgia neigiamų aspektų - stebina priėmimo į šią programą tvarka ir kriterijai, priimant studentus tiesiai į paskutiniuosius studijų programos metus.

EG pripažįsta, kad motyvacijos testas turėjo teigiamos įtakos konkursiniams balams visoje Lietuvoje, įskaitant ir KU, tačiau pažymi, kad sumažėjo pretendentų skaičius. Todėl svarstoma, ar kaip testas, jis yra toks geras, koks galėtų būti, priėmimui į (ankstyvosios) vaikystės pedagogikos studijų programą. Šioje srityje siūloma atlikti tyrimus.

EG yra ypatingai susirūpinusi vertinimo tvarka turint omenyje praktiką. EG yra susirūpinusi, kad santykinai mažai personalo yra kvalifikuoti vertinti dalykus, kurių moko studentai praktikos



metu. Ypač EG susirūpinusi dėl to, kad tik dalis vertinimo yra skiriama už studento faktinį mokymą klasėje, ir dėl to, kad praktiškai visi studentai gauna labai aukštus įvertinimus.

## **2.6 Programos vadyba**

Kalbant apie programos vadybą, teigiamas aspektas yra tai, kad Universiteto akademinis personalas palaiko artimus ryšius su esamais ir buvusiais studentais, darbdaviais ir profesinėmis asociacijomis. Taip pat EG pažymi, kad KU kokybės sistema buvo patobulinta ir jau yra planų įsteigti Kokybės tarnybą bei paruošti universiteto kokybės vadovą. Kita vertus, EG mano, kad nėra aiškaus vaidmenų ir atsakomybių pasiskirstymo kokybės klausimu. Taip pat kokybė nukenčia dėl to, kad studentai ir absolventai negalėjo įvardinti jokių nesėkmingų programos pakeitimo atvejų, kurie buvo vykdomi atsižvelgiant į jų, kaip socialinių dalininkų, pateiktus pasiūlymus.

## **III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

Ekspertų grupė (toliau – EG) rekomenduoja KU gerai apsvarstyti VP programos pavadinimą, kad būtų aiškiai nurodyta amžiaus grupė, į kurią ši programa yra nukreipta. Pavadinimai „Ankstyvosios vaikystės ugdymo ir priežiūros pedagogika“ arba „Pedagogika ankstyvaisiais ugdymo metais“ būtų tinkamesni.

EG rekomenduoja, kad būtų apsvarstytas pavadinimo „Baigiamasis darbas“ (angl. *Final Thesis*) keitimas į „Mokslinio tyrimo darbas“ arba „Baigiamasis mokslinio tyrimo darbas“. Tai būtų paremta žodžių skaičiumi ir studentai būtų skatinami atliekant savo tyrimus naudoti ne tik apklausas ir klausimynus, bet ir kitus metodus.

EG rekomenduoja apsvarstyti „Baigiamojo pedagogikos studijų darbo“ modulio pervadinimą (Registracijos nr.: 263) į „Studento mokymo aplanką“, kuris vėliau galėtų tapti pagrindu mokytojo profesinės raidos aplankui.

EG rekomenduoja KU remti ir skatinti kokybės kultūrą, įskaitant Kokybės tarnybos įkūrimą, „Kokybės vadovo“ paruošimą ir publikavimą ir aiškų atsakomybės už kokybę ribų nustatymą.

EG rekomenduoja, kad KU apsvarstytų tolimesnius veiksmus, kurių reikia norint užtikrinti, kad tie, kurie vykdo VP programą, patys būtų kvalifikuoti dirbti su 0–7 metų amžiaus vaikų grupe ir turėtų vertingos ir neseniai įgytos tokio darbo patirties.

EG primygtinai rekomenduoja iš pagrindų peržiūrėti praktikos svarbą VP programoje, ypač atsižvelgiant į jos trukmę, universiteto kuratorių (tutorių) / praktikos vadovų ir mentorių iš įstaigų vaidmenį jos vertinime, aplinkų, kuriose atsiskleidžia studentas, įvairovę, siektinus standartus ir vertinimo (naudojantis visą vertinimo balų skalę) standartizavimą tarp skirtingų aplinkų, praktikos vadovų ir mentorių.

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