

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

V. A. GRAIČIŪNO AUKŠTOSIOS VADYBOS MOKYKLOS **STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS** *TURIZMAS IR SVETINGUMAS* (653N83002)

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY (653N83002) STUDY PROGRAMME

at V. A. GRAICIUNAS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba Report language - English

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Turizmas ir svetingumas
Valstybinis kodas	653N83002
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Turizmas ir poilsis
Studijų programos rūšis	Koleginės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (3), Ištęstinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	180
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Turizmo profesinis bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2003-05-29

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Tourism and Hospitality
State code	653N83002
Study area	Turizmas ir svetingumas
Study field	Tourism and leisure
Kind of the study programme	College Studies
Study cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (3), Part-time (4)
Volume of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor in Tourism
Date of registration of the study programme	29/05/2003

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

V. A. Graiciunas School of Management (AVM) Vilnius is a private college and a branch of the college established in 1993 in Kaunas. The campus in Vilnius opened in 2010. AVM Vilnius college provides 4 programmes: (Tourism and Hospitality, Marketing and Sales Management, International Business and Communication, Logistics Business Management). In Vilnius, they offer the Professional Bachelor degree in Tourism which is designed to cover three main competence domains: Generic, Business Management and Programme Specific. They have about 100 students and 30 teachers (16 full time and 14 part-time) on the programme.

The college is planning to introduce a new programme for which the first students will be recruited in August 2014.

Evaluation Team

The chairman of the team: Prof. Frank McMahon, former Director of Academic Affairs and Director of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management, Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland); Zita Krukonyte, Head of Human Resources at Holiday Inn and Ecotel, Vilnius (representative of the social partners); Alina Katunian, Professor, Tourism Department, Vilnius College/University of Applied Sciences; Ass. Prof. Claudia Moessenlechner, Head of the Language Center at Management Center Innsbruck (MCI) (Austria); Detlev Remy, Programme Manager, Les Roches International School of Hotel Management, (Switzerland) and Darius Vizbaras, Vilnius College (student representative).

The procedure of the evaluation

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) of the first cycle programme Tourism and Hospitality was made available to the expert team in February, 2014, a month before the planned visit to the college. All the members of the team examined the SAR individually and contributed to the preparation of a preliminary report which indicated strengths and weaknesses and discussion points. The team obtained further information during the site visit on 21 March, 2014 when members met programme teachers, students, graduates and social partners and viewed the facilities available to the programme (the Panel had previously met the Senior Management and Programme Coordinators at the sister college in Kaunas). After the visit the panel held a meeting to discuss the contents of the evaluation report and agreed upon a numerical evaluation of every section of the evaluation. The expert team amended a draft report and their comments were integrated into one document by the chairman of the team.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, and are appropriate for a Professional Bachelor degree. They are based on the Dublin Descriptors, the Law on Higher Education and Research, the EQF and the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and the Management and Business Administration study area description. There is need to improve the study programme with more European hospitality-oriented software systems like IT course of "Opera" software for the hotels in addition to the Amadeus system which they have

It is the view of the Review Team that the programme aims and learning outcomes are based more on the requirements for general business programmes and not sufficiently on the specific needs of the Tourism or Hospitality industry. The balance of the current programme is strongly in favour of business management subjects and not on Tourism/Hospitality specialisations such as Food & Beverage Management, Accommodation Studies, Reservation Systems, Tour Guiding, etc. It was not clear to the Review Team that any survey was undertaken in Vilnius before they started this Tourism and Hospitality study programme. There is a need for further discussion between the college and the social partners on the learning outcomes for the programme and what kind and number of higher education specialists in Tourism and Hospitality are required in Vilnius and other Lithuanian regions.

The learning outcomes should include the achievement of a reasonable degree of fluency in English and Russian as these are the two languages of most importance to the hospitality industry in the Vilnius region. Social partners who met the Review Team indicated that travel companies required graduates who speak at least two foreign languages.

The Social Partners valued the students' knowledge of hospitality practices.

When the programme aims have been adjusted as recommended here, they will need to be better publicised for young people such as those finishing high school who might be potential students in the future.

The level of studies and the qualification offered could be improved by providing a practical learning experience for all students from year 1 onwards. This is detailed in the section on curriculum design below.

The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualification offered are compatible with each other. The fact that there are separate specializations in Tourism Administration and Hotel Administration justifies the programme title of Tourism and Hospitality. However, the word "Hospitality" was added to the programme title comparatively recently.

At the time of the Review Team visit in March, 2014 there had been just one year of graduates of Vilnius AVM who produced final theses and it was evident that theses from Tourism Administration specialisation of that year took 16 topics out of 24 final theses. So, it could be that students from the Hotel Administration specialization were not enough encouraged by the teaching staff to analyse more Hotels business problems. Or alternatively, that the recent addition of the word "Hospitality" came too late for some students who had already chosen their area of specialization.

2. Curriculum design

The expert team satisfied that the curriculum design of AVM Vilnius meets all legal requirements for the Professional Bachelor degree. However, the programme would be strengthened by having greater concentration on practical work in the Tourism/Hospitality industry. There is room for such extra practical work in the first two years of the programme. Food and Beverage Management is a major part of the Tourism and Hospitality business. The teaching of this subject could be strengthened if the subjects Catering Service and Restaurant Management, that are mentioned as alternative courses with the 3 ECTS credits each and they take place in the 3rd semester, could take place earlier in the programme, preferably semester 1 or 2 and definitely with more hours. It is also recommended that the college investigates with the social partners the feasibility for students to gain more practical experience in hotel or tourism operations during the first two years of the programme. There is scope for such practice by working some afternoons, evenings, weekends or during the summer vacation.

Study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly, their themes are not repetitive, but there are some subjects that could be usefully combined to provide more hours to learn deeper and analyse properly main tourism and hospitality subjects. For example, newest IT technologies, all main software of tourism and hospitality, food and beverages field, etc.

In the module of Communication and HR Management it is mentioned that two foreign languages are studied. At the meetings with the students and alumni, it was confirmed that they

have English and German classes, but just for 2 semesters out of 6. And just 3 ECTS credits each. They would like to have an opportunity to learn Russian and Spanish language and for at least 2 years. The social partners have confirmed that Russian language is necessary for many positions in the Tourism/Hospitality industry. So the Review Team recommends that the college reviews its foreign language provision to give priority to English and Russian. And the quality of the tourism and hospitality programme would be improved if the students could have any module lectures provided in English or Russian language.

Business language (Lithuanian) is on the list of the alternative courses. But in view of the fact that Lithuanian is the main language of the country, consideration should be given to making it a core rather than an elective subject

The subject Business Ethics is also on the elective courses list, but in the management of the Tourism/Hospitality industry it plays an important role in influencing the actions of managers. So it is recommended that Business Ethics should be on the list of the core subjects on the Tourism and Hospitality curriculum.

The scope of the programme (3 years full-time study or 4 years part-time) seems sufficient to allow the achievement of the learning outcomes. Some consideration might be given to the possibility of extending the time available for industrial experience by students undertaking such experience during summer vacation time.

The content of the programme does not in all the ways reflect the latest achievements in science and technologies – nothing was mentioned in SAR and during the meetings with stakeholders about the main Tourism Information Systems or, for example, Social Media subjects which are used in the majority of labour markets of Tourism and Hospitality in Lithuania and throughout Europe.

3. Staff

The study programme is provided by the teaching staff meeting legal requirements. In addition to meeting the legal requirements, the staff members were highly regarded by students who expressed themselves happy with the quality of teaching. The students described the atmosphere in the college as "very friendly".

The theoretical qualifications/education of the teaching staff is at really high level. All have at least a Master's degree while five teachers have PhDs.

According to the AVM self-assessment report (point 29) there are 27 teachers out of 30 who have three or more years of practical experience in the area of teaching. However, teachers are not so strong in regard to work experience in relevant industries. Evaluation in the school confirmed that there are few teachers with substantial Tourism and Hospitality business experience which creates the biggest value for the students' motivation to look forward to working in this area.

The college has ambitions to offer some programmes in English; however, on the basis of the teachers whom the Review Team met, most teachers are not capable of teaching through English. So a substantial investment in English language training will have to be undertaken if the dream of offering English language courses is to be realised.

The number of the teaching staff is adequate. But to ensure learning outcomes, there is a requirement for key teaching staff to have permanent job contracts in this school, and not be just part time employed. On the basis of the staff members who met the Review Team it appears that most staff are not on full-time, permanent contracts. This appeared to be the situation that emerged from meetings with the teaching staff, students and alumni of the AVM. According to the SAR (annex 2) 16 teachers are permanent and 14 are part-time at the AVM Vilnius. Undoubtedly, the small number of students has an adverse effect on the number of permanent teachers that can be employed; it is the view of the college that it prefers to recruit a specialist for each course even tough this militates against having more permanent full-time teachers.

As the programme Tourism and Hospitality in Vilnius AVM started in 2010, there has not been time to establish a pattern of staff turnover. But the lack of permanency for many staff may cause a high level of turnover in future years.

The AVM in Vilnius encourages teachers' professional development by encouraging participation in the up-skilling programmes and involvement in relevant project activities (e.g. curriculum modernization and internationalization, assessment of attainments, teaching/learning methods, etc.). In 2013, a cohort of 28 teachers was involved in a project which involved the teachers in travelling to Belgium, Finland or Northern Ireland. This was very useful and the Review Team urges the college to continue such projects to enhance staff development.

It has been indicated by AVM that the college is engaged in three types of research activities: academic research, applied research and also pedagogical development and innovation. AVM invests in research in order to maintain and develop the existing experience and to be able to disseminate the results of its activities to the community it serves. Some of the teachers who met the Review Team were involved in research. One, for instance was involved in a survey on what is needed for regional demands while another was responsible for communicating with students on their final theses. But none of the teachers had any publications to date. Encouragement is needed to get the teachers to publish their research findings. If this is done, it will improve the college's reputation with the Tourism/Hospitality industry and it will make it more likely that students will benefit from research findings that are reflected in current teaching.

4. Facilities and learning resources

AVM Vilnius is based in an historical building (Franciscan Monastery) in Vilnius city old town. From outside, the building looks a bit tired and requiring full renovation. Inside, however, the building has many fine features and is adequate for studies (apart from the need for more heating). In some auditoriums the average temperature at the visiting time with the Review Team(2014-03-21) was about 10-15 C degrees.

There is a need for a Student Council room to enable students to participate more fully in the social and academic life of the college. Students would welcome a range of social activities including debating, photography and sports.

There is not any practical learning place for Hospitality/Tourism operations available in the building. For example, there are no kitchens or food service area or travel agencies. It would be extremely useful to have a Practice Firm in the college as it would allow students to simulate a real Tourism or/and Hospitality department or something similar to that. Currently, the college overcomes this disadvantage by arranging practice sessions for its students in some of the Tourism or/and Hospitality companies based near the school. And teaching staff from that area are working on that.

AVM Vilnius gave insufficient information about practice contracts with real Tourism and/or Hospitality companies. The graduates who met the Review Team indicated that they were required to find their own placements. As the placements are a vital part of the programme, the

college should formalise the arrangements for placements, following discussions with the social partners and graduates and should assist students to find appropriate places.

The college has implemented an e-learning platform called Moodle which provides students with on-line learning support and an authoritative source of information about the programme. Students value that facility but suggested some improvement in regard to better timing with uploading learning materials for students. The cost of developing good resources for Moodle is expensive and since many universities and colleges in Lithuania are using Moodle it would be sensible to investigate the feasibility of sharing Moodle resources. This could be very beneficial for students and staff and could make savings for the college.

There is virtually no library in the school. Just two shelves of the books in the administrative office were presented as a library. Students mainly use the local public libraries. There is considerable room to improve this aspect of the facilities. Whilst public libraries are very useful and are deemed helpful by students, they cannot support high-level research by students and staff.

5. Study process and student assessment

Admission is organized by the Lithuanian General Admissions Organization (LAMA BPO) as a one channel of admissions procedure. The requirements are clear. However, the success rate in recruiting students has dropped alarmingly in recent years, from 52 full-time students recruited in 2011, to 18 recruited in 2012 to 8 recruited in 2013. As the college has indicated to the Review Team that the minimum in-take should be 8 students, on current trends there will not be a viable cohort next year so the college management needs to find a solution for this problem very quickly.

The majority of students are from the Vilnius region and surrounding areas. The college has a dormitory offering 50 living places, but it is 10 km from the college, so very few students live there.

The college has indicated that 75% of students successfully completed the programme in 2013 and that the remaining 25% dropped out. But it is not clear on what basis the calculations are made. The students who met the Review Team indicated that there are currently five students in the second year, even though 18 students had commenced the first year in 2012/13 and should

now be in second year. This would suggest a large loss of students because of drop-out or examination failure. The Review Team also met two graduates who indicated that there had been a large drop-out from their cohort. Neither of the two graduates is working in a Tourism or Hospitality specialisation (one works as a consultant to a shopping centre while the other is studying crafts and jewelry-making).

There was some evidence of the significant competencies of research skills development of the students in Tourism and Hospitality programme. But more could be done to involve students doing their final thesis in real research projects in which teachers are involved, such as the survey on regional needs mentioned above.

AVM in Vilnius has an Erasmus mobility programme like Kaunas AVM and also an Erasmus University Charter, but in the last three years just 1 student (out of 70 approx.) went out of Lithuania, 4 got internships in EU, and no students were coming to the college. Therefore there is a danger that existing partners will quit the partnership when student exchanges are going in one direction only.

The college assists students in receiving social security grants in accordance with student achievement. The college also supports disabled students and students who may need or apply for loans.

The tuition fee is clear. It is possible for a student to receive government financing for the T & H programme but is very rare. The college has indicated its belief that funding is directed towards state universities and colleges so most students who take the programme are self-financing.

The principles of assessment of students are part of AVM Academic Regulations document and they are characterized by transparency, objectivity and fairness. Details of the assessment procedures for each module are set out clearly on "Moodle" and are explained by lecturers at the beginning of each module. Students expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements. It has also been the practice of college management to seek to ensure active participation by the students during each semester and to encourage among students the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.

Since AVM in Vilnius was opened in 2010, just one cohort of students has graduated so there is not sufficient data to decide if graduates are meeting labour market requirements..

6. Programme management

Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation are clearly allocated but have to be developed, as part of the divisions may be overworked as there is no institutional body separately responsible for the Tourism and Hospitality study programme, its monitoring, data gathering, analysis and decision making.

There is a detailed list of indicators in respect of which data is collected and analysed. These indicators include entrants' competition scores, student attendance, student mobility, drop-out rates, employment of graduates after graduation, student opinions, teachers' opinions, social partners' opinions, innovations in teaching methods, etc. This list seems reasonably comprehensive to enable the management of the college to make any changes in the programme which become necessary.

Surveys of student opinion are undertaken each year in each subject and students are satisfied that some of their suggestions are being implemented to upgrade study programmes. And the social partners indicated that they are invited twice or three times a year to participate in quality assurance exercises in the college in relation to the T & H programme. The college needs to develop and publicise how the feedback gained from surveys is used to improve programme.

The Review Team has concluded that the internal quality assurance measures are well-designed in regard to data collection but to make them effective and efficient there is need for a Programme Committee. Such a committee should have teachers, students and social partners as members and should meet at least once per semester to solve current problems and to make recommendations for longer-term improvements.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. AVM Vilnius should work more with the social partners to analyse deeper the labour market needs in Vilnius and other regions of Lithuania and Europe with a view to improving the programme.
- AVM Vilnius should involve to a greater extent the new generation (students and alumni)
 in a deeper analysis of the tourism and hospitality market and allow that generation be
 more involved in the structuring and updates of the programme aims and learning
 outcomes.
- 3. The college should develop its foreign language strategy to ensure that the T & H programme should have two main foreign languages, English and Russian for two or even all three years. Because in Lithuania in the Tourism and Hospitality business both English and Russian languages are required almost everywhere. And additional languages like German, French or/and Spanish would create the bigger value for the Tourism and Hospitality programme in the school and for the tourism industry as well.
- 4. The college should assist its staff to gain experience of the tourism and/or hospitality (T&H) industry. For those who have not worked in the industry, the college should arrange some industry experience, in cooperation with the social partners. This would ensure a more business- oriented approach for the students.
- 5. The college should have its own library which includes the relevant Tourism and Hospitality books and journals.
- 6. The teaching staff and the students could be more encouraged by the college management to participate in research and applied research activities.
- 7. The college should publicise the topics of the final theses on the school website, with a view to encouraging interest among Tourism and Hospitality professionals in the research work of the college.
- 8. The college management should offer some encouragement to teachers to publish the results of their research.
- 9. An investment needs to be made to improve the capacity of lecturers to teach in English.
- 10. The college has indicated that it intends to introduce Programme Committees and the Expert Team strongly supports that proposal. Such a committee should have teachers, students and social partners in its membership and should meet at least once per semester to monitor progress on the implementation of the programme and to sort out any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

- 11. It is recommended that the college discusses with the social partners the ways in which student work experience in industry could be extended, perhaps by using summer vacation periods or free afternoons during the early years of the programme.
- 12. The international mobility of students needs to be greatly increased. This mobility can be either for study periods or for work placements.
- 13. Continue the development of Moodle as a support to student learning and an aid to good administration.
- 14. Investigate the feasibility of sharing Moodle resources with other higher education institutions, both in respect of Tourism/Hospitality subjects and other subjects with a view to improving the resources available to students and to making savings in development costs.

IV. SUMMARY

In the following, a summary of comments regarding the Tourism and Hospitality programme implemented in V.A. Graiciunas School of Management, Vilnius is given. The process of evaluation follows the SKVC system for the evaluation of degree programmes and is based on the Self-Assessment Report provided by the college and the assessment agreed upon by the Review Team during its visit on the premises and following discussions.

The programme is offered in full-time and part-time modes and use is made of distance learning techniques (Moodle) to support the delivery of the programme and its administration. The programme prepares graduates for careers in two specialisations, namely Tourism and Hospitality. The Review Team formed the opinion that not enough attention is paid to the subjects that would support a specialisation in Hospitality. This could be remedied by the introduction of modules on subjects such as Food & Beverage Management and Accommodation Studies.

Whilst the learning outcomes of the programme are well developed and are appropriate, they have failed in two respects: they have not attracted students in sufficient numbers (only 8 new first years registered last year, down from 52 two years previously) and the learning outcomes are not understood by the social partners. So this is an area that requires urgent action by the college management. Accordingly, it is recommended that the college discuss the programme learning outcomes with all the stakeholders, but especially the Social Partners. Such a discussion could lead to both improved learning outcomes and an improved appreciation of the work of the college among the social partner and prospective students. Therefore, the college needs to take more proactive steps to clearly communicate programme aims to the industry. Social Partners indicated that they appreciated the attitude of the students to hospitality.

The combination of theory and practice is an important and strong component of any good programme in this field. There is scope to improve this programme by the addition of more Hospitality/Tourism subjects in the first two years. And both students and social partners felt that practical training should be extended, if possible. The Review Team feels that this could offer added value for the students and can have a positive effect on students' future careers and development as professionals The college should investigate the possibilities of adding more industry practice in the early years of the programme and by utilising summer vacation periods for paid summer work by students.

The curriculum of the programme must meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education as well as the requirements of the labour market. The curriculum design meets the legal requirements for a Professional Bachelor degree the Review Team is satisfied that the programme meets the regulatory requirements but it recommends that the timing of the industrial placement should consider tourism seasons and allocate longer periods of practice.

There is a strongly-felt desire for a greater competence in foreign languages, in particular English and Russian as these are the languages most needed by staff who interact with tourists to Lithuania. The college should address this desire.

The staff members of the college are enthusiastic and meet all the legal requirements for their appointment as teachers. They are also respected by their students and by graduates who expressed themselves happy with the good student/staff relations in the college. However there are some weaknesses that need to be addressed. Most staff members need to improve their competence in the English language, especially as the college has plans to teach programmes through English, more staff with direct experience of the Tourism/Hospitality industry are needed and more staff undertaking research relevant to the themes of the programme are needed. It is also recommended that staff members attend more conferences and that they interact more with the industry professionals in Lithuania. One way in which interaction with the industry could be enhanced is that staff members could undertake brief placements in industry in conjunction with the Social Partners. The college should invite more industry professionals to come to the college as guest lecturers.

One way to encourage more research would be create a space on the college website to list the various student final year theses. The publication of thesis topics on the website or by newsletter to hotel/tourism organisations might prompt wider industry interest.

The college lacks a library apart from a few token books. The students indicated that they rely of local public libraries. While such libraries may support students at the early stages of their studies, they are unlikely to support the research efforts needed later in the programme. So an investment in a library is urgently needed.

The college has invested in the development of teaching materials and maintains a Moodle elearning platform. The development of good resources for e-learning is expensive so it would be worthwhile the college and other colleges investigating the feasibility of sharing resources by the establishment of a resource repository. This could be a win-win arrangement.

The admission requirements are well founded, based on Ministry of Education regulations but there has been an alarming drop in student numbers in the recent past and this is a cause of concern. There is a student mobility programme but the number participating has not been growing so this needs attention. An option to increase student mobility could be to increase work placements abroad.

During their visit the Review Team found that there is adequate academic and social support for students available including scholarships, counselling services and social programmes. Whilst there is an attempt at gathering data on the operation of the programme with a view to analysing the data and making improvements to the programme, this process is not sufficiently formalised. The Review Team recommends a more structured and formalised approach which includes a Programme Committee with staff, student and social partners as members.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Tourism and Hospitality* (state code – 653N83002) at V. A. Graiciunas School of Management, Vilnius Department 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
	Total:	12

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

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^{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.