



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto

PSICHOLOGIJOS PROGRAMOS (61206S104, 612S10001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *PSYCHOLOGY* (61206S104, 612S10001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Psichologija</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	61206S104, 612S10001
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	psichologija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	psichologijos bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Psychology</i>
State codes	61206S104, 612S10001
Study area	social sciences
Study field	Psychology
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Cycle of studies	First
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (4)
Scope of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor in Psychology
Date of registration of the study programme	1997/05/19

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I. INTRODUCTION

Vilnius University has been offering undergraduate programmes in psychology since 1969, and initially the programme lasted five years. The current BA programme, of four years duration, is now presented for renewal of approval.

The programme is seen as the first stage of training to become a professional psychologist. While some students terminate their studies after receiving their BA, those who wish to practise in one of the specialisms of psychology such as clinical or organisational psychology are required to continue their studies to obtain a masters qualification in their chosen area.

The present review has been carried out under the guidelines and procedures of SKVC. The initial stage involved the preparation of a self-evaluation report by the University. This was seen and commented on by the team of experts, following which the team visited the University from October 3-7, 2011. This visit was carried out in conjunction with the evaluation of four masters programmes in psychology for which separate reports have been prepared. During the visit the team had the opportunity to discuss the programmes with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, graduates and employers. They also visited the library, offices, teaching space and laboratories associated with the programme.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The BA programme is designed to provide a basic background in psychology, further to which students can specialise in their chosen field at postgraduate level. The overall aims of the programme are clearly specified in the self-evaluation document. However, these aims and outcomes are not always reflected in the way the individual courses are structured and presented in the documentation, and the assessments are not always aligned with the overall aims and outcomes.

Intending students are able to access clear and accurate information about the programme before they apply to the University, but might appreciate rather fuller information about the precise content of the courses and about which options will be available to them.

The aims are consistent with what is required to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology, and are also consistent with European initiatives such as the Europsy project and the Bologna process.

While there is, on generally agreed criteria, a shortage of applied psychologists in Lithuania which the BA programme will help address, it is uncertain whether there will be sufficient

expansion of the labour market in the current economic climate to ensure that this shortage will be rectified. However, graduates of this programme will be well prepared to pursue further training in professional psychology and will also have valuable skills to enable them to pursue careers outside psychology. Previous graduates seem to have had relatively little difficulty in pursuing further training and worthwhile careers both in psychology and outside.

In sum, the programme has appropriate aims and outcomes, which could be better reflected in the individual courses, and meets the need for a first stage qualification in psychology. Information provided to intending students is accurate but could be expanded.

2. Curriculum design

The BA programme meets the guidelines laid down by the Lithuanian Government and is, as mentioned above, consistent with European recommendations.

The curriculum is wide ranging and covers all the main topics in psychology, some at a detailed level. The programme is spread over four years, which means that there is fuller coverage than in some countries where the BA stage lasts only three years. The course team have taken advantage of this extra year by allowing for deeper coverage in some areas and by having a range of optional and free-chosen subjects which broaden the students' educational experience. Students reported that they felt that there were too many general, non-psychology, courses early on in the programme.

The course team might wish to consider whether it might be more advantageous to students to move to a three-year programme. This would be consistent with the Bologna process and with the Europsy project, and would enable students to commence professional training a year earlier than at present. There would be the disadvantage that some of the broadening topics would be lost and of course there are national guidelines which currently prevent such a move, but if it is to the students' advantage it perhaps ought to be pursued.

The teaching methods are fairly standard, with perhaps an over-emphasis on formal lectures and seminars, and the visiting team heard of instances of poor practice (reading from a textbook at a lecture, requiring students to read material and then repeating this in a lecture). However, there are also several instances of more innovative teaching methods, for example the use of case studies and problem-based learning.

The literature used for some of the courses is somewhat dated.

In sum, the curriculum covers all the main areas of psychology and uses appropriate, if traditional, teaching methods. There may be some advantages to moving to a three-year rather than four-year duration.

3. Staff

The staff teaching on the psychology parts of the programme consist of 11 professors and 24 associate professors (docents). These all appear to be adequately qualified, with the majority possessing PhDs in psychology.

These staff do not spend all their time teaching on the BA Psychology, and overall teaching loads are reported to be fairly high. Despite this, staff seem approachable and supportive to students.

The research output of staff is somewhat variable, as is the engagement in professional practice, though overall these are at an acceptable level. It is normally accepted that staff teaching at undergraduate degree level in psychology should have current activity in at least one of these areas. If Lithuanian psychology is to increase its international stature, then it probably means that the psychology staff at Vilnius University need to increase their research output, especially that in international journals.

Staff engage in continuous professional development in the form of visits to other universities, and attendance at conferences, both of which help ensure that their research and scholarship is up to date. There seems to be relatively little internal staff development, and some of the training courses which are put on (for example in student-centred learning) seem not to have been well attended by psychology staff. There also appears to be little systematic training in approaches to teaching and learning, either for new or for more experienced staff.

In sum, staff are appropriately qualified but may need support if their research output is to be improved. Opportunities for staff development, for example in teaching practice, are limited.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Psychology is housed in an elegant, even inspirational, building, but one which has limited space. Perhaps inevitably this leads to certain limitations, for example in the provision of staff offices and the number of laboratories. While there are good quality laboratories for psychophysiology, psychophysics and social observation, facilities for other types of psychological practical work are limited.

The library is in another elegant building and contains high quality reading rooms. There are textbooks and journal articles in languages other than Lithuanian, for example, English, Russian, and German, though the quantity of these is somewhat lower than in many other countries.

However, this is compensated by the excellent availability of electronic resources including Psycinfo, Web of Science, and many more.

In sum, the facilities and resources are of a high standard.

5. Study process and student assessment

The programme is a popular one and it is therefore possible to select students of a high standard. The great majority of students complete their studies in the allotted time, but a surprising number do not do so – more than 20% in some years. While the majority of the non-completers manage to finish their studies the following year, the reasons for late completions should be explored further to see if there are structural problems inhibiting completion – especially since this means that an already long (four year) course becomes even longer for some students.

Students have opportunities to obtain experience of research and professional practice, though the students met by the team would have appreciated less theory and more practical experience during their studies.

A number of students engage in study-abroad programmes though the number is in some ways disappointingly small. One reason for this is that there is a belief among students that they might miss essential courses while studying abroad and be obliged to retake these on their return.

On graduation, the majority proceed to postgraduate programmes in psychology, and employers and professional trainers report that the students are well equipped for further study and training.

The assessment is described as fairly traditional, and indeed often involves time-limited formal examinations during which students are required to write essays. However, scrutiny of the course outlines reveals a much wider range of methods of assessment, including team presentations, practical papers, seminar work, oral exams, and many more. Students reported that they were fully informed of the methods by which they would be assessed.

One issue with the assessment concerns the extent to which it is designed to ensure that the specified learning outcomes had been achieved. For some of the courses, further work is needed to ensure that the assessment used is the best way of testing that the desired outcome has been achieved.

In sum, assessment processes are of a good standard, though rather traditional, but care needs to be taken to ensure that they reflect the aims and outcomes of the programme. There are opportunities for study abroad and the take up of such opportunities might be increased by ensuring that students are not disadvantaged on their return to Vilnius.

6. Programme management

There are three bodies responsible for managing the programme: the Faculty of Philosophy (admissions and resources), the Department of General Psychology (teaching and staffing) and Programme Committee (quality of programme and legal issues). While there is potential for confusion with multiple bodies involved, each of them seemed fully aware of their roles and such confusions had not arisen.

There are regular attempts to obtain feedback from students about the quality of their programmes and of the teachers delivering them. Collection of student feedback might be made more systematic to ensure that all teachers carry them out. There are attempts to involve other stakeholders (e.g. psychology professionals) in the evaluation of the programme, but inevitably this is not always possible with such busy people.

In sum, the programme management is good, but the collection of feedback on the programme, for example from students, could be more systematic.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The overall aims and outcomes need to be specific, clear and assessable, the courses need to ensure that they are consistent with these aims and outcomes, and the assessment system needs to assess whether they have been achieved.
2. The information provided to students should be fuller and should indicate more about course content and about which options are likely to be available.
3. The possibility of moving to a three-year programme should be explored.
4. The staff development opportunities should be expanded, especially in the area of pedagogic practice. An excellent start could be made by disseminating the good practice that exists in teaching, learning and assessment to all staff in the Department.
5. If the University wishes psychology to develop on the international stage, further support will be needed for staff research. Time and money for research support staff (e.g. research assistants) are probably the main requirements.
6. A more systematic approach to the collection of student feedback and response to it should be adopted.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Psychology* (state codes – 61206S104, 612S10001) 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	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process, student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	19

*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.

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