



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**Lietuvos muzikos ir teatro akademijos**  
***TEATRO STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS (621W41004,***  
***62403M104)***  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
***OF THEATRE STUDIES (621W41004, 62403M104)***  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy

Grupės vadovas:	Prof. Dr. Sc. Iskra Nikolova
Team leader:	
Grupės nariai:	Prof. dr. Jon Nygaard
Team members:	Paula Tuovinen
	Assoc. prof. dr. Valdas Jaskūnas
	Justas Bujokas

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
Report language is English

## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Teatro studijos</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621W41004, 62403M104
Studijų sritis	meno studijų sritis
Studijų kryptis	teatro kryptis, nuo 2010 m. teatro ir kino kryptis
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	80 (120 ECTS)
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	teatro magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2005-07-29

## INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Theatre Studies</i>
State code	621W41004, 62403M104
Study area	Creative Arts and Design
Study field	Theatre Studies, since 2010 Theatre and Film
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Level of studies	second
Study mode (length in years)	full time (2)
Scope of the study programme in credits	80 (120 ECTS)
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Theatre Studies
Date of registration of the study programme	29 July 2005

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre is a well-established and respected institution. The mission of the Academy is to train highly qualified professionals in music, theatre and multimedia art.

The LMTA has a Faculty of Theatre and Film (FTF) that offers the following study programmes: Acting, Theatre Directing, TV Directing, Sound Directing, Theatre Studies, Film Studies, Screenwriting, Film Studies and Art Management.

The programme being evaluated is located in the Faculty of Theatre and Film, one of two faculties in the Academy. It is the only programme of its type in Lithuania and is designed to meet the country's need for specialists in this subject area. The programme was last evaluated in 2005. No international evaluation of the programme has been undergone previously to the present one.

The International Peer Review visit of the expert panel to the M.A. Theatre Studies Programme at LMTA took place on 22 September 2011. All necessary documentation (in English) had been submitted to the expert panel in advance. All meetings (with senior administrative staff, staff responsible for preparation of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), teaching staff, students, graduates, employers) and observations (of facilities) were carried out in accordance with the preliminary Agenda. The atmosphere of the meetings was open and informative. Finally, the key general conclusions and remarks were introduced by the team leader of the expert panel to the representatives of the Programme. These conclusions have formed the basis of the present evaluation report.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

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

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined and clear, still public accessibility could be bettered by publicising information of the programme on the institutional website.

The MA Theatre studies programme in the field of Arts is offered exclusively at the Academy and fulfills the need for specialists in the market. The identity of the programme in comparison with similar programmes at Vytautas Magnus University and Klaipėda University is characterised by the much closer involvement of the students in the theatre process.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are overall consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered. However there should be direct proof of learning outcomes matching the Dublin Descriptor for Second Cycle studies.

It is also noteworthy that the reference to the international documents of higher education in arts, such as the Dublin Descriptors (Polifonia) aimed at artistic competences (paragraph 28), is misleading and does not comply with the nature of the programme. The programme experiences lack of subject benchmark statements or exemplary documentation to describe its proper nature and characteristics in the subject area of theatre studies rather than theatre performance.

The programme learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, but the level and extent of competences aimed at are not clear enough.

The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

Main strength:

- Clear identity of the programme.

Main weakness:

- Lack of subject benchmark statements or exemplary documentation to describe the nature and characteristics of the programme in the subject area of theatre studies.

## ***2. Curriculum design***

The curriculum design meets general legal requirements, but there is obviously a need to introduce systematically the ECTS methodology for management of students' workload. The curriculum lacks coherence in calculation of students' workload according to national regulation which prescribe 1 ECTS credit for 25-30 hours of student's workload (see ECTS user guide).

There is good coherence within the curriculum in terms of spread of subjects and thematic representation. The content of the subjects is consistent with the type and level of the studies.

There is lack of evidence that the learning outcomes targeted at gaining "knowledge of other spheres of art history and humanitarian sciences", skills to "evaluate phenomena and processes of ... foreign theatre art", "researches on ... contemporary processes of culture" are sufficiently supported by the content of curriculum.

As a major goal of the MA programme as compared to that of the BA, the staff of the programme considers providing good analytical skills that lay the foundation for pursuing the career of a researcher. The content of the subject courses (see *Theories of Contemporary Theatre Studies, Theory and Methodology of Drama, Opera Dramaturgy Analysis*) highlights that among the analytical methods in most cases various forms of textual analysis dominate. The experts consider relevant to diversify the approaches to contemporary theatre by introducing also alternative analytical perspectives that pertain to performance arts, such as those of culture, visual and media studies, and soft social sciences (e.g. cultural anthropology).

The course "Semantics of Oriental Theatre" deals with very basic information on the subject and is more appropriate to the BA programme.

The scope of the programme is relevant to ensure attainment of learning outcomes, however concentration on theatre as aesthetical phenomenon rather than cultural and social communication is discerned on methodological level. Broader cultural setting of theatre practice is requested.

The content of the programme would better reflect the latest agenda of theatre art if wider scope of interdisciplinarity was introduced. The scope of the programme proves an overwhelming concern with aesthetic phenomenon and textual analysis, however to attain the

learning outcomes that pertain to analytical perspectives to contemporary theatre, interdisciplinary and social engagement of theatre on larger scale is requested.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

Main strength:

- High level of expertise in methods of text analysis.

Main weaknesses:

- Although Lithuanian higher education institutions are still in transitional period from the point of view of view of ECTS system, it is noticeable, that curriculum is designed unsystematically, therefore a greater attention should be paid to ECTS methodology;
- Undiversified analytical perspectives with predominant textual analysis on content level; broader cultural setting of theatre practice and a wider scope of interdisciplinarity are missing.
- The curriculum should incorporate more widely the latest world trends and developments as a whole and in the specific subjects.

### ***3. Staff***

The composition of the staff of the programme fully meets legal requirements. The programme involves 10 teachers 3 of whom are professors and 9 have acquired research degree. There is a single teacher who is not a scholar.

The Faculty has 12 technical staff, including librarians, who provide appropriate support for the Faculty's programmes, including the MA Theatre Studies.

The range of pedagogical experience of teachers on the programme is from 10 to 30 years. The proposal to teach a number of modules in English is laudable, but it is essential that staff (and student) competence in the language is at a sufficiently high level for this to be effective. The experts consider that this varies from excellent (fluent) to weak. Selection and preparation/training, of staff to deliver these modules will need to be managed carefully.

Teachers are active in their professional fields as evidenced by the production of artistic works and events, and publication of academic papers. These are used to inform their teaching on the programme and enrich the students' learning experience. A number of teachers hold positions in relevant associations and committees. This serves not only to enhance the programme but also to raise the profile and recognition of the programme and the Academy.

The staff possesses very high expertise in Lithuanian theatre studies which is tested by research production in Lithuanian publications. However, it is noticeable that a few scholars publish their research internationally. To encourage the better international involvement is an urgent need which has to be considered as a strategic issue in staff recruitment policy.

The number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes, however the range of research interests represented by the scholars involved need to be more diversified. A significant number of staff of the department, and outside speakers, contributes to the programme on a part-time basis. There are urgent needs to have more full-time positions at the department for running this programme.

The teaching staff turnover is relevant and entails the changes in the curriculum. During the period from 2005 to 2010, 5 new teachers were employed at the Department as a consequence of introduction of new subject courses. There is little information in the SAR as to the influence of staff turnover on the programme.

It is stated in the SAR that teachers of LMTA have a nominal 40 hours per week workload of which half is expected to be spent in the classroom while the other part is allotted to artistic/research, methodological and other activity. Since national legislation allots 36 weekly hours for the teachers, the workload allocation should be reviewed accordingly. Besides, an expected class contact of 20 hours per week is high, especially for staff expected to pursue research and/or maintain their standing as artists. There is a need to reconsider the methodology of teachers' workload distribution to ensure their possibilities for pedagogical and scholarly development.

The statute of the Academy states that '...every five years teachers may be relieved of pedagogical work for a period of up to one year to engage in scientific research, artistic activity and professional skills improvement. During this period teachers are paid their average monthly salary.' However, this paid sabbatical scheme has been suspended as a result of financial conditions. While the experts recognise the immediate financial imperative, the Academy must be mindful that its reputation depends to a large extent on the credibility and recognition of its staff in their respective fields. If staff is not to stagnate, but to maintain their standing and remain at the forefront of their professional field, they need to refresh their knowledge and skills. The Academy needs to provide further opportunities for staff to engage in professional development activities such as scholarship and research and general updating of subject and pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Notwithstanding the withdrawal of the sabbatical programme, staff continues to enhance their professional standing through teacher exchange programmes and conference participation. It is important that the outcomes of these activities are clearly linked to programme delivery and development in order to enhance the student learning experience.

The Academy is partly supportive of the professional development of the teaching staff in term of provision of funds for visiting festivals, conferences or other events abroad, however the lack of funds for publication makes scholars publish their research in other institutions.

The teaching staff is composed of the leading scholars in the field of theatre studies on the national level which has good relevance to the programme being reviewed. The expert panel experienced high commitment of staff, in spite of low salaries, honest commitment and openness to develop the programme.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

#### **Main strengths:**

- High professional qualification of staff which is comprised of leading national professionals in the field;
- High commitment of staff, in spite of low salaries; honest devotion and openness to develop the programme.

#### **Main weaknesses:**

- Inappropriate methodology of teachers' workload distribution with regard to scholarly and pedagogical development;
- Too low number of full time teaching staff endangers the systematic implementation of quality assurance.

- Low international involvement of the researchers.

#### ***4. Facilities and learning resources***

Facilities and learning resources for the programme are distributed between the Academy's buildings. The SAR indicates that for the programme classes 6 rooms can be used. It is also noted that currently LMTA has 6 classrooms equipped with multimedia, audio and video facilities and Internet 2 of which are located in the building where the classes of the programme are usually convened. Students did not report any problems of a lack of space, yet insufficiency of classes equipped with the multimedia was referred to.

There is a continuing refurbishment programme, although much work remains to be done to ensure that the premises are fit-for-purpose.

Students and teachers have access to libraries, reading rooms. However, opening times (0900 to 1700 or 1800 hours) are limited and the Academy is advised to consider extending the opening times to facilitate greater access of students and teachers to these resources.

Although the SAR indicates that the Academy considers the provision to be adequate, the experts consider that it is insufficient and in some case, outdated. Further investment in specialist resources is required, including the replacement of outdated equipment, and improved student access to these by extending times when these may be obtained

There are just 4 PCs available for students in Sluškai building, which the experts consider to be clearly insufficient for the student numbers, a view shared by the students. Although wireless internet connectivity is available in all buildings and students may bring their own laptops, the experts consider that IT provision is inadequate and requires augmentation as a matter of urgency.

Table 4 in the SAR breaks activities down in to lectures, practical classes, seminars and independent/individual student work. However, the term practical work is used loosely and includes seminars and project work and so there is little need for resources to provide practical training.

The title of the subject course "Research Study Practice" is quite misleading since it specifically aims at rhetoric and presentational skills rather than practical research or/an activities.

Although programme students are provided with some textbooks in Lithuanian, the experts consider that library provision is in urgent need of improvement. There is small number of books from the reading lists of subject courses found in the Academy library. Book and journal stock should be enhanced, particularly in international texts and there is a need to increase the provision of multiple copies for borrowing. Considerations should also be given to substantial augmentation of visual archive of video records of various plays that are used during lectures and seminars.

The experts consider the library provision to be limited and in need of considerable augmentation. Provision of borrowing rights and an extension of the currently limited hours of opening need to be addressed by the Academy.



Although the Academy subscribes to appropriate databases and other useful catalogues and websites, as mentioned previously there are relatively few PCs available within the Academy to enable students to access these, unless they have their own laptops.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

#### ***Main strength:***

- Good availability of textbooks and resource material on Lithuanian theatre.

#### ***Main weaknesses:***

- Regular provision of research library, especially with books in foreign languages, and update of computing facilities is in urgent need of improvement.
- Limited technical equipment of classrooms.

## ***5. Study process and student assessment***

The SAR states that admission to the programme was organised only once in 2007. There are no explanations in the SAR as to this irregularity of admission. The Academy is encouraged to consider regular admission to the programme, at intervals relevant to the resources of the programme and to the labour market demand.

Prospective entrants are required to sit a written exam which consists of discussion on the issues of the subject field. Entrants are asked about their motivation to study in the programme, provide arguments regarding the theme of research, research object and other problematic issues related to the planned research object.

Requirements for admission to this particular programme are not specified within the publically available information on the entrance exam. It does not contain methodology or ranking criteria either. It is recommended that the Academy should formalise the admission requirements and publicise assessment criteria in the interests of transparency and fairness.

The Department should reconsider the openness of programme with introducing the system of selecting prospective entrants from the wider range of candidates who meet the settled qualification requirements. It should be taken as a possibility to increase interdisciplinarity of the programme as well as its prestige among the programmes in the humanities.

The organisation of the study process generally ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Administration reported a problem of formal recognition of students' achievements gained during participation in the activities or projects other than study abroad based on institutional agreement. In these cases administration is taking decisions in each individual case. To encourage students' initiative to increase professional knowledge and skills gained informally or by self-education the institution is suggested to formalize the system of recognition of such student achievements.

Students are encouraged to participate in research and applied research activities, such as students' conference and writing reviews of theatre performances for the culture and art newspapers and journals.

The SAR states that the mobility of the students in the study programme of Theatre Studies was very low, which was due to the fact that all the programme students had long-term or short-

term job contracts and did not want to give up such important sources of income. There was a single student who went to study under the Erasmus programme.

The programme does not have a strategy to promote international exchange of staff or students. The Academy, and Department, will need to address this issue in order to raise the profile of the programme. Students and employers would welcome more international teachers spending some time in the Academy. The Academy is recommended to increase its efforts to attract foreign academics to spend time there in order to support staff professional development and to expose students to a wider range of perspectives on their subject. To this end the Academy is encouraged to adopt a more proactive approach to encouraging student and staff mobility, including greater provision of opportunities to develop foreign language competences.

The Academy should consider that one of the means to encourage international involvement of the students is to establish a systematic provision of granting graduate studies research abroad.

According to the SAR there are many ways in which the Academy provides students with information about the programme: LMTA website, introductory days, meetings with administration and teachers, Faculty announcement board, personal communication with teachers, via the Academic Affairs Office, etc. On the other hand, no systematic continuous and regular way of communicating information is mentioned in SAR. During the meetings students noted, that such dynamic system for information dissemination exists in the form of e-mail messages. But talking to students also revealed that only some students use university e-mail inbox as a means of acquiring this information. For example, during the meeting with students a considerable number of them stated that they do not get information on international exchange programmes whatsoever, while others replied, that such information is supplied by e-mail.

Counseling of students about their career possibilities does not appear to be very active or structured. SAR indicates that the main burden of this sort of counseling is expected to be taken by teachers, who are professionals, capable of doing so. According to the SAR, the Majority of graduates of the programme enter the theatre or culture labour market. However, institutionally there is no clear system of supporting students in their pursuit of career and plans for improving on this aspect of academic support should be embodied. On the positive side, promising students of MA Theatre Studies are encouraged to continue their academic career in doctoral studies – this was reported by MA Theatre Studies students, some of whom are planning on continuing their studies in PhD, and graduates who are already working on their PhD thesis.

Students may retake exams in accordance with the Law of Higher Education. The possibility to study according to the individual programme exists and is regulated as well.

The Academy's Physical Education Centre provides students with a possibility to go in for sports. Moreover, the specificity of the programme allows for good possibilities of students creative / cultural activities. The student's cooperation with the cultural press is encouraged.

Students of the programme receive government funded scholarships. As an addition, one-time scholarships by LMTA Senate are awarded for the very best students. However the biggest part of student financial support is from modest government grants and, taking into account the comparatively expensive living in Vilnius, additional sources for supporting students would be welcome. On the positive side, the administration of the programme stated that due to the efforts of the Faculty one Theatre Studies student received a grant covering the study tuition fee, which is a very considerable support.

Students did not have complaints about insufficient dormitory placement, but it was noted that dormitories are in very bad condition and need serious maintenance repair.

Student achievement is assessed in grades (from 1 to 10; negative marks are from 1 to 4 inclusive). Students' knowledge and acquired skills are evaluated in diverse ways and forms (exams, tests, public performances, etc.) not only in grades but also in pass/fail (course credit) assessment. The new legislation no longer allows the latter assessment system, therefore academy should take steps immediately to replace it by other forms of assessment.

Assessment criteria reflect the intended learning outcomes of the courses and take in to account knowledge and skills, however a few course descriptions contain assessment criteria for identifying the level of academic attainment. The final assessment score is based on intermediate and final performance. Typically the final assessment, such as an end-of-course examination, contributes between 60 and 70 per cent of the final grade. Assessment criteria are made available to students, often through discussion at the start of a semester and in subject documentation. Students expressed satisfaction with the information they receive.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

Main strengths:

- High commitment and motivation of students.
- On the whole, good communication and interaction between teachers, administrative staff and students.

Main weaknesses:

- Limited possibilities to enter the programme for the candidates with the background in the subject fields other than theatre studies;
- Low students' mobility and international involvement
- Institutionally there is no clear system of supporting students in their pursuit of career and plans for improving on this aspect of academic support should be embodied.

## ***6. Programme management***

Much of the programme management is conducted at faculty and institutional level, with little input at the operational, programme, level. Notwithstanding the relatively small size of the Academy, the experts consider it important that a programme leader other than the head of the department be appointed to have lead responsibility for day-to-day programme management as well as informing medium to longer term programme development.

The involvement of other stakeholders is often on an informal basis. The graduates and employers who met the experts said they would be happy to be involved in advisory panels to inform programme development. This represents an invaluable source of information which the Academy could use to ensure the currency of the programme and enhance the employability of its graduates.

There is a paucity of information on key performance indicators for the programme available. The collection, collation and analysis of statistical information on graduate attributes, employer requirements and employment patterns is vital if the Academy is to secure the continued relevance of the programme.

The only evaluation of the study programme of Theatre studies was conducted nationally in 2005. As a result of recommendations of this evaluation, new descriptions of the subject courses

were prepared and the content of the study programme was supplemented by 2 new subject courses.

Students can inform quality improvement through student representatives and informal contact with teachers. However, there were no examples of how students have effected change in the programme. Also the site visit proved that the surveys of students' opinion are irregular while its results lack visibility. The Academy is advised to formalise and generally improve means of obtaining and using student feedback in order to enhance the provision.

Teachers can inform quality matters through formal participation in task forces or departmental meetings. However, once again, no specific instances of teachers influencing the programme were presented.

The Academy Council includes a number of eminent external stakeholders. However, the SAR states that 'the role of the majority of members of the Council elected in 2005 in the activity of LMTA is not as significant as it could be and their influence on study quality is minor' This is a missed opportunity that the Academy may wish to address by involving stakeholders at a more operational level in order to provide concrete support for the programme. There is a need to establish a more formal and effective system to engage with local organisations to support student learning and curricular enhancement, such as an employers' forum or advisory board.

The SAR admits that the Academy's internal quality assurance system has not been formalised. Currently it is fragmented, spread across a number of functional areas of the Academy. There is, as yet, no clear set of key performance indicators with which to conduct an internal quality assessment. The experts consider that, as a matter of necessity, the Academy needs to implement a robust quality assurance system with clearly articulated performance indicators against which the programme can be evaluated.

### ***Main strengths and weaknesses***

Main strength:

- The programme management maintains positive informal communication between administration, teachers and students.

Main weaknesses:

- Informal rather than formalized system of quality assurance; no clear set of key performance indicators with which to conduct an internal quality assessment;
- Student feedback should be carried out more regularly and its impact should be more visible.
- Low involvement of external stakeholders at operational level.

## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1. The library provision is in urgent need of improvement. Book and journal stock is in urgent need of enhancement, particularly in international texts and there is a need to increase the provision of multiple copies for borrowing. Considerations should also be given to extending the opening hours to facilitate greater accessibility, at least during the session time. Computing facilities are extremely limited and require augmentation as a matter of urgency.

3.2. The Academy needs to enhance support and motivation for teachers to engage in professional development such as scholarship and research, participation in international conferences and research networks, and general updating of subject and pedagogical knowledge and skills, including possibility for sabbaticals.

3.3. There is a need to introduce into the programme interdisciplinary content and shared courses with cognate subject programmes on larger scale, to enhance closer co-operation with humanitarian units from other institution.

3.4. It is recommended that the Academy should formalise the admission requirements and publicises assessment criteria in the interests of transparency and fairness. The Academy is encouraged to consider regular admission to the programme at the intervals relevant to the resources of the programme and the labour market demand. There is a need to reconsider the openness of programme with introducing possibilities for the prospective entrants with the background in other subject field other than theatre studies.

3.5. The Academy is recommended to increase its efforts to strengthen and diversify intercultural exchange and co-operation, to attract foreign academics to spend time there in order to support staff professional development and to expose students to a wider range of perspectives on their subject. It is recommended to establish a systematical provision of granting graduate studies research abroad.

3.6. The organisation and management of the programme needs more clear articulation and responsibility allocation. Appointment of a programme leader or manager – a member of the teaching staff, with a vision for the content and development of the programme, and a programme committee with participation of student representative would enhance effectiveness of the programme on operational level. The Academy is advised to formalise its quality assurance system and to generally improve means of obtaining and using student feedback.

3.8. There is a need to establish a more formal and effective system to engage with stakeholders (alumni, employers, external experts, people/institutions with vested interests) at an operational level, such as an employers' forum or advisory board, to facilitate timely updates of the programmes and increase commitment to graduates' careers.

#### IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Teatre Studies* (state code – 621W41004, 62403M104) is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by fields of assessment.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	2
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>16</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupēs vadovas:

Prof. dr. Iskra Nikolova

Team leader:

Grupēs nariai:

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Team members:

Paula Tuovinen

Assoc. prof. dr. Valdas Jaskūnas

Justas Bujokas