



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Šiaulių universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *REGIONŲ PLĖTRA IR VALDYMAS*
(valstybinis kodas - 628N70001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE*
(state code - 628N70001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Šiauliai University

Experts' team:

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Regionų plėtra ir valdymas</i>
Valstybinis kodas	628N70001
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Viešasis administravimas
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Viešojo administravimo magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2014-06-30

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Regional development and governance</i>
State code	628N70001
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Public administration
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Public administration
Date of registration of the study programme	30-06-2014

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

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

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. General

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

No.	Name of the document

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

Šiauliai University (hereinafter – ŠU) is the biggest university in Northern Lithuania. The University was founded in 1997 after the merger of Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute and Šiauliai Polytechnic Faculty of Kaunas University of Technology. ŠU consists of 3 faculties and 2 institutes (Faculty of Social Science, Humanities and Arts, Faculty of Technology, Physical and Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Education Science and Social Welfare, Research Institute and Continuing Studies Institute) and offers 59 Study Programmes - 34 Bachelor's and 25 Master's. The university offers in the field of Public Administration one Bachelor's study programme – *Public Administration* and two Master's programmes – MA in *Regional Development and Governance*, which is the subject of this evaluation report and MA in *Public Governance*. The *Regional Development and Governance* programme is a joint degree developed and implemented by the Department of Public Administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts of Šiauliai University and the Institute of Social Sciences and Administration at the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of Pardubice (Czech Republic) since September 1, 2014.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according to *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 28 October, 2016.

- 1. Prof. Dr Frank McMahon (team leader)**, *academic*, Former Director of Academic Affairs, Dublin Institute of Technology and one of Ireland's Bologna Experts, Ireland
- 2. Dr Christine Leitner**, *academic*, Senior Adviser, Centre for Economics and Public Administration, UK
- 3. Dr Tomáš Černěňko**, *academic*, Assistant Professor, University of Economics in Bratislava, Department of Public Administration and Regional Development, Slovakia
- 4. Assoc. Prof. Dr Regimantas Čiupaila**, *academic and social partner*, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania
- 5. Ms Janine Wulz**, *student member*, Vienna University, Austria

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

Statements on evaluation of programme aims and learning outcomes according to the following criteria:

- *the programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible;*

The aims and intended learning outcomes of study programme *Regional development and governance* are clearly defined and are compatible with the national descriptors of the study field of Public Administration. The aims have been set out in terms of Knowledge, Research Competences, Special competences, Social Competences and Personal Competences.

The programme aims and learning outcomes intended for graduates include a thorough knowledge of economic social, political and regional development and its interrelation with public administration; knowledge of public policy analysis; ability to implement innovation; knowledge and creative application of management instruments and ethics of public interest. The overall focus is on the governance of regional development. Full details are available in the Joint Master's Programme Regional Development and Governance Handbook which is accessible on the university's website for all students and other interested parties to see at <http://projektai.distance.su.lt/course/view.php?id=5>

- *the programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market;*

The programme aims are based on the public needs and transformed into learning outcomes. These are discussed with a Council of Social Partners which consists of 15 representatives of public sector institutions. Improvement mechanisms are prepared and implemented. It is noted in the SER (paragraph 24) that there were no essential changes in the aims and learning outcomes as a result of the consultations that took place between June 2015 and June 2016. This process resulted in the production of the SER which was submitted to SKVC as part of the evaluation process.

At this time there is a strong demand for graduates of the programme *Regional Development and Governance* from local authorities which has been presented to the review team during the site visit.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that a large number of students/graduates are not from Lithuania, this local demand cannot be satisfied. This also leads to another issue. The focus moves from regions which are demanded by the social partners (e.g. Šiauliai County or euro-regions) to “global regions” which can better satisfy the needs of students (and attract more students). This adaptation causes an internal problem of the curriculum design (this will be explained later). In addition, it is somewhat surprising that there are no students from the partner University of Pardubice (hereinafter – PU). This might be due to the fact, that the courses are held in English only but also the fact that the profile of the programme does not fit the local/regional context. Since the programme only started recently, more time and efforts needs to be dedicated to promoting the programme.

- *the programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered;*

The aims and learning outcomes of study programme *Regional development and governance* are consistent with the type and level of studies (Master’s degree) as defined in the descriptor of the study field Public Administration approved by the Minister of Education and Science in July 2015. Table 2 of the SER compares the learning outcomes of the programme with learning outcomes of the second cycle of university studies set out in Ministry descriptors. For example, the descriptor required graduates to have the ability to “integrate knowledge and manage complex situations” while the programme has a learning outcome for graduates to be able to “apply the knowledge in practice while organising and conducting research”. When the five major learning outcomes are compared, it is clear they are very similar.

They are also consistent with the learning outcomes for second cycle degrees of the European Qualifications Framework. The award is based on the successful achievement of 120 ECTS credits which is within limits specified for national and European awards.

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

The name of the programme, *Regional development and governance*, its learning outcomes, its content and the qualification offered (Master’s degree in Public Administration) are all compatible with one another. The general design of the programme offers a wide focus (scale and scope of regions). But the panel was left with some doubt about the definition of “regional” and whether it applied to regions within a country (Lithuania) or applied to larger geographical areas e.g. Baltic countries.

2.2. Curriculum design

Statements on evaluation of curriculum design according to the following criteria:

- *the curriculum design meets legal requirements;*

The curriculum design meets the legal requirement for a Master’s degree which includes: 90 – 120 ECTS credits (it has 120 credits);

Not less than 30 credits for thesis (it has 30 credits);

Not less than 60 credits for field studies (it has 72 compulsory credits plus 18 elective credits).

At least 25% of the volume of the joint study programme to be spent in partner higher education institutions on the basis of physical mobility of students. This requirement is met because students spend one semester at the partner university. The physical students’

mobility is concentrated in one semester – for students admitted at ŠU mobility is allocated to the second semester, for students admitted in PU – it takes place in the third semester. In the first semester 2 compulsory subjects in each University will be provided by distance mode.

Final thesis to be evaluated by a panel including competent professionals, professional practitioners and representatives of social partners and at least one member from another HEI (it is indicated in the SER (Para. 48 recalling Annex. 8). The participation of a member of another HEI in the Commission for defence is not obligatory but recommended. In the joint study programme every Master thesis is assessed – evaluated also by a teacher from the partner university. So the condition of Master thesis evaluation by a representative of another HEI is met.

- *study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly, their themes are not repetitive;*
The study programme *Regional development and governance* is offered on a full-time basis over four semesters (each 30 credits). First three semesters are also even in courses distribution – 5 courses per semester. The fourth semester is dedicated to the preparation and defence of the Master's thesis. The content of courses is well defined and modules are consistent. Students and graduates confirmed that the subjects are not repetitive. Modules are distributed between the partner universities and enable mobility and exchange among students in both countries.
- *the content of the subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies;*
The content of the subjects/modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies. The content of each syllabus is based on Advanced Knowledge which is expected in Master's degree programme. There is also an emphasis on the ability of students to evaluate and manipulate information and on the ability to apply knowledge and thereby solve problems and create policy.
The teaching/learning methods employed in the programme include case study analysis, team projects and scientific paper analysis all of which reinforce the view that the programme is at master's degree level.
- *the content and methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;*
The content and methods of the study programme *Regional development and governance* are appropriate for the achievement of the learning outcomes. In particular, the methods used, especially for blended and distance education are well developed and ensure students achieve the intended learning outcomes. As mentioned above, the use of team projects and case study analysis are appropriate where the learning outcomes include the development of teamwork skills and analytical skills.
There is a visible interest (due to the evaluation system) to improve the programme by all stakeholders (teachers, students and social partners).
- *the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes;*
The scope of the programme (4 semesters, each for per 30 credits) is sufficient to ensure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Within the European Higher Education Area, Master's degrees vary from being one calendar year (= three semesters) to two years (four semesters). So this joint degree is at the upper end of duration.

- *the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies.*

The content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in Regional Development and Governance. The staff members are involved in research networks that help to improve the course curriculum. Also the Social Partners Council at the Department of Public Administration helps to match the programme content to current needs and challenges.

There is little focus on the role of technology (e.g. in module 2, Annex 2; module 7 focuses on e-government and e-democracy frameworks and processes) which the review team considers particularly important for regional development. During the panel visit, teachers, students and alumni explained that in their perspective the curriculum is satisfying, but should be extended to focus more on law and ethics and its national and international use in public management. Moreover, they would need additional transversal competences and skills to apply them in their everyday working life. Thus, the review team recommends a revision of the curriculum in order to include these elements.

2.3. Teaching staff

Statements on evaluation of teaching staff according to your Agency's or the following criteria:

- *the study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements;*
The staff members teaching the programme are duly appointed.
At least 80% of teachers should hold a Doctor of Science degree (in the study programme *Regional development and governance* it varied from 82.3% in the teaching period in 2014-2016 to actual 80.77% today).
There is also a requirement that 20% of the volume of subjects of the study field Public Administration shall be taught by teachers holding a professor's position. Currently in ŠU, 19.2% of teachers hold a professor's position but when one takes into account the PU staff members who teach 25% of the programme, all of whom hold professor's positions, then the programme meets the criterion.
- *the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes;*
The staff members who teach the study programme *Regional development and governance* meet the legal criteria as 81% have doctoral degree (at least 80% of the staff should have doctoral degree).
The qualification and experience of teaching staff ensures the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. There is no legal requirement for university teachers to have experience of work in a particular sector. In this case only one of the ŠU teachers has practical experience of institutional governance of public sector (SER paragraph 70). It would be desirable that this percentage be quite a bit higher. But the staff members have very good research experience both within Lithuania and abroad.
The fact that the programme has been prepared within a project (with financial subsidy from the EU) has a positive effect on the qualification of the teaching staff. To ensure the outcomes of the project (programme) the teaching staff took part in several courses to improve their skills (e.g. academic writing, case studies, English language, e-learning and others).
Moreover, the ŠU uses its heritage in pedagogy and offers further education for teachers in teaching (e.g. LMS Moodle) or other relevant topics (according to the demand from teachers, students or pedagogy development).
The practical experience and related topics are covered by visiting lectures from professionals (from social partners) or teaching staff with experience of working in public or private sector.

- *the number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes;*
 The number of teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes. In 2014 there were 9 teachers in ŠU and a further 7 teachers in PU to deal with the small cohort of students recruited (just 10 students). In 2015, there were 18 students admitted and a total of 15 teachers of the programme.
 The courses are provided by different teachers, their specialization and deeper knowledge is valuable for the content of the curriculum. In addition, a number of lectures are provided by guest lecturers from abroad. These visiting lecturers came from USA, Germany, France, Greece, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland and others. Also the participation of PhD students can be enriching for students – doctoral students often are in touch with latest findings in their research/thesis topic.
- *teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme;*
 Almost all the staff members teaching on the study programme *Regional development and governance* are employed full-time at ŠU/PU. This provides stability in teaching. The policy of one-year contracts for some teachers (due to the governmental policy) in the period of 2015-2016 can affect the turnover of teaching staff negatively. It also creates an atmosphere of uncertainty what can lead to members of the teaching staff leaving. It has not created a problem to date and fortunately it is the intention of the ŠU to provide teachers with long-term contracts in future again.
- *the higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme;* The teachers from ŠU involved in this programme had already in the preparation phase of the study programme taken part in several courses to improve their skills. Teachers from both universities explained during the meeting with the review team, that they are participating in several training courses and conferences, also on teaching methodology and that they are motivated to participate in further training and conferences.
- The institution has also a system of staff development. The Department works with individual research-methodical action plans for every teacher and it foresees improvement possibilities. These plans are assessed at the department level. Even with such a well-established support system for teaching staff in their professional development, there is no evidence of mandatory training in pedagogy for new staff. Consideration should be given to the introduction of mandatory training in pedagogy for all new teachers, with a view to improving the quality of teaching. This would be especially important, as teaching in this programme is linked with using new technology. Thus, courses to improve blended learning and innovative teaching methodology would be highly recommended.
- *the teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) directly related to the study programme being reviewed.*
 The teaching staff is focused on research in the field of Public Administration and Governance and Regional Development. The division in research focus of the ŠU/PU is visible. The ŠU focuses more on the research in the field of Public Administration and Public Governance whereas the PU focuses on topics in the field of Regional Development. The teaching staff is active in cooperation with other researchers in their field of research. They are integrated in research networks and scientific institutions such as: Lithuanian Research Council, various scientific organizations (European University Research Network OLA (Observatory of Local Authority), ERSA, Baltic Regional Research Association, SALDUVĖ, Researchers' Excellence Network, European Neural Network Society. Professors Diana Šaparnienė and Aistė Lazauskienė working in the Programme are

members of the Group of independent experts on European Charter of Local Self-government at Council of Europe and many academics from foreign universities interact with staff in ŠU. The guests came from the University of Nebraska in Omaha, Wichita State University, Ohio State University and the Public Administration School (USA), Chemnitz Technical University (Germany), Paul Sabatier-Toulouse III University (France), Aegean University (Greece), Mustafa Kemal University (Turkey), Faculty of Management of Novo Meste (Slovenia), Comenius University in Bratislava (Slovakia), PU and Mendel University (the Czech Republic), Assen Zlatarov University (Bulgaria), Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Wrocław University and National Louis University (Poland), Liepaja University (Latvia) and others. Many teachers met during the site visit participated in Erasmus exchange activities. Mobility statistics mentioned in the SER provide the following numbers of visits by year: in 2011, 6 came, 13 went abroad; in 2012, 9 came, 16 went abroad; in 2013, 1 came, 11 went abroad; in 2014, 3 came, 12 went abroad; in 2015, 3 came, 12 went abroad).

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

Statements on evaluation of facilities and learning resources according to the following criteria:

- *the premises for studies are adequate both in their size and quality;*
In the period 2012-2016, they had 22 classrooms including three large lecture rooms (over 150 students) and a further 19 rooms equipped for group work. Six classrooms were equipped with 127 computers. In September 2016, the Faculty moved to new premises at ŠU which were visited by the panel. The facilities include lecture halls and seminar rooms equipped with computers, projectors and magnetic boards. The new library is becoming a meeting point for the university community and the community. There are several positive points that should be mentioned. The library offers working rooms that can be used by the students to work on their projects/research (can be booked in advance). The library includes a kindergarten, which can be used by students and other visitors during their stay in the library. This is very helpful for young parents. Moreover, the premises in the library are accessible for disabled visitors.
The review team was satisfied that the current premises in ŠU are adequate in terms of size and quality.
- *the teaching and learning equipment (laboratory and computer equipment, consumables) are adequate both in size and quality;*
The programme *Regional Development and Governance* does not require much by way of specialist equipment. The review team was satisfied that the classroom facilities at ŠU were adequate to house the programme in its current location. Students and alumni of the programme expressed themselves satisfied with the facilities and equipment when they met the review team. The library facilities also comply with state-of-the-art accessibility requirements. There are also specific facilities at ŠU for online courses and exchange with the partner University and other guest lecturers from abroad. ŠU also uses the facilities of the distance learning centre for the programme.
- *the higher education institution has adequate arrangements for students' practice;*
Most students study part-time, therefore the question is if there is enough room for students' practice, peer interchange and contact with teacher. However, many students already work in public administration and therefore prefer to study part-time. Other students have completed the BA degree in Public Administration in which practice is mandatory. So very few current students need practice in public administration. However, students who have had no practice in the public sector have limited opportunities for internships, as they are neither mandatory nor organised or supported by the programme management. This could be solved by ŠU in collaboration with the social partners who are senior staff members of various social sector organisations in Lithuania.

- *teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases) are adequate and accessible.*

Teaching materials are adequate and described in detail in the SER. Feedback from the students during the site visit was positive. From the review team's point of view a broader offer of books of European public administration would be a benefit for the students. A positive point is the access to 23 scientific databases and the appropriate on-line journals. These can be accessed by the students and teachers also from outside of the university.

Students appreciate the support of Moodle, the e-learning platform used by ŠU. It is particularly useful for enabling students who cannot attend all lectures to know what has been covered in class. It also has the potential to distribute to students a vast array of good material which many universities, including top USA universities, are making available free of charge. The American material is in English language so the fact that ŠU uses English for its joint Master's degree means it can use the material for its students.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Statements on evaluation of study process and students' performance assessment according to the following criteria:

- *the admission requirements are well-founded;*
The admission requirements are clearly defined. It is good that the programme is, under condition of taking bridging courses, also open to students who did not complete a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration. There is no regulation about how the bridging courses are organised. This is considered a lack of transparency. It is recommended to define clear regulations for bridging courses, opportunities and obligations and publish these at the programme's website.
An interesting idea is the possibility for public administration professionals to join the programme after at least 3 years practice in public administration. This is considered a good example of recognition of prior learning.
- *the organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes;*
The organisation of the study programme *Regional development and governance* is logical, with three semesters devoted to teach modules and one semester devoted to completion of the Master's thesis; it can provide the achievement of the learning outcomes. It covers a theoretical framework for research methodology and introduction to modelling of (regional) processes. The programme ensures international mobility within the programme (all students recruited to ŠU spend one semester in the Czech Republic - 2nd semester of the programme and all students admitted to PU spend 1 semester in Lithuania - 3rd semester of the programme), and also enables additional international mobility. This is well included in the programme organisation. All students and graduates found the support of Moodle (an e-learning platform) very helpful. They appreciate the online teaching and distance learning facilities that are used regularly in this Joint study programme. The courses have a good coverage and support for the students in this virtual space. This was also considered to be very helpful when the students study abroad (Czech Republic/Lithuania or other country) during their mobility.

- *students are encouraged to participate in research, artistic and applied research activities;*

A positive point is that the students of study programme *Regional development and governance* are encouraged to participate with their Master Thesis research in scientific conferences for young researchers, not in a special competition or conference for MA students; 8 of 10 did participate. A deeper regional focus of the content of Master thesis would be a plus – some of the reviewed theses had a relevant (regional development or governance) topic but not the content where the regional level or governance context was missing. Findings made in researching Master thesis topics are (if it's possible) presented to relevant partners (SER Para 136). An example given was of a study of Siauliai where the results and recommendations were presented to the administration of Siauliai City Municipality.

Social partners explained during the interview, that they offer the department to involve students into running projects (realised by the social partners). However, students met during the site visit did not mention their involvement in these projects. It was interesting that on the MA in Public Governance programme, based in the same department of ŠU, that many Master's theses were based on real current problems in the work situations in Lithuania because the students were based there. This did not occur on the MA Regional Development and Governance to the same extent because many of the students were non-nationals.

- *students have opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes;*

The students of the joint master programme *Regional development and governance* are obliged to study one semester at the partner university and that arrangement is honoured. They also have the possibility to participate in mobility programme Erasmus+. To date, 2 students (we have to consider that the number of programme students is small) have used the opportunity and visited a university additional to their Czech partner university.

There is one problem that has to be mentioned. Students from 3rd countries claimed, that there are some serious problems with the stay in Czech Republic (foreign police). A consultation or a better communication of the legal requirements would be helpful for the students.

Students also claimed that support from the university in finding funding would be helpful. Not only to help them to cover mobility expenses but also the study fees and other expenses related to the study.

- *the higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support;*

Both universities offer a range of academic and social supports. ŠU offers scholarships, buddy system, social allowances (paid according to the actual legal situation) and it supports foreign students concerning adaptation in another cultural and social environment. A strong administrative support is present. At PU, a system of student-mentors operates while there is assistance from student organisations to help students solve problems of accommodation. PU also offers financial support to students according to its rules

Academic support is provided via library services and there are consultation services for students at ŠU and PU. The consultation hours include teacher to students (these consultation hours account for about 12% of classroom work hours), administrative specialists to students and student to student. At both universities, a "buddy system" operates under which new students are advised by senior students who act as mentors.

- *the assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available*
The arrangements for the assessment of student achievement are clearly defined for each course in its syllabus. The workload and tasks students have to fulfil to achieve assignments are adequate.
Each student has access to his grades and syllabus via the university information system.
- *professional activities of the majority of graduates meets the programme providers' expectations*
So far the programme is implemented for a short time (since September 2014), there are only few graduates yet and the results cannot be generalised.
Graduates the review team met during the site visit made clear that they are satisfied with their employment opportunities, even if they do not work in Lithuanian public sector or are looking for a job in their home country in Africa. Most graduates do not work in regional government so far. This is considered an issue by social partners in the region of Šiauliai. As mentioned above, the idea of the social partners originally was to educate qualified experts for their own region to manage dedicated funds. This point deserves further attention to ensure that the programme will be viable in the future.

2.6. Programme management

Statements on evaluation of programme management according to your Agency's or the following criteria:

- *responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated*

First the review team has to state, that the management and evaluation of the study programme *Regional development and governance* is very well designed and working. Both universities established relevant bodies to manage the MA programme. The Programme Management Committee is responsible for the administration and management of the Programme. It consists of 12 members where 7 are representatives of the PU and 5 of the ŠU.

The Study Programme Committee is directly responsible for the implementation of the aim, quality supervision, monitoring and improvement of the Programme. The Study Programme Committee has 8 members (4 academics, 2 from each university, 2 social partners – per 1 from each university) and also includes students (the last 2 members – 2 students from the ŠU) however, none of the students interviewed was involved in the committee.

The Social Partners Council at the ŠU Department of Public Administration reviews once a year the compliance of the Programme with the needs of the labour market, examines the quality of studies, makes proposals for content and quality improvement and offers topics for Master theses. There is no evidence in the SER of such a committee at the partner university in Pardubice but PU does appoint a Programme Guarantor who liaises with Social Partners.

- *information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed*

From the beginning of the study programme *Regional development and governance*, student surveys have been part of the evaluation process (SER Para 14), the results are discussed by teaching staff and the Joint Study Programme Committee (this committee contains in its membership teachers of ŠU and of PU). However, course evaluation is mainly based on online evaluation. Other methods (such as peer learning, focus groups, etc.) are not used so far.

The relevance of master theses and programme content is discussed with social partners within the Social Partners Committee. ŠU appoints a Programme Curator while PU

appoints a Programme Guarantor. These two senior staff members work together to ensure that social partners are consulted and that best international practice is followed in this MA programme in both universities.

A list of indicators for quality evaluation is prepared (Annex 11). The implementation will start this year for first time, so no results are available so far.

While the first students graduated in summer 2016, new data are available and will be used for programme improvement.

There also is a positive example in dealing with results of evaluation. If there is an issue, that is relevant for the students the university/department realises a workshop on this topic to help both sides to manage the challenge.

- *the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme;*

The evaluation and improvement system at the ŠU is designed quite well. There is an obligatory university system and another at the department level. The evaluation outcomes and committees recommendations are used to improve the quality of the programme.

The issues of quality assurance in PU are regulated by the Quality Assessment and Efficiency Assurance of Educational Process directive on the basis of which the Programme analysis and internal assessment is carried out.

- *the evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders*

Stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process. Students, social partners and the teaching staff have many possibilities (at various levels) to enter the evaluation and improvement process. For example, social partners the reports in the subject Regional Economics were presented to professionals in Siauliai Municipality, giving them an opportunity to be informed and to make critical comment. This was in addition to social partner involvement in the Study Programme Committee, the SER group and the Social Partner Council. The Social Partner Council at the department level is positively rated by the social partners and the teaching staff as well.

- *the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient*

The quality monitoring system at ŠU is designed as very robust with a relatively large number of entities at several levels (university level, faculty level, department level, programme level, social partners, and students).

The QA system is considered effective and efficient. All stakeholders met during the site visit are engaged in improving the quality of the programme and the educational process. Results of regular evaluations (using mainly online questionnaires) are used at different levels and from various involved stakeholders and are taken into account to improve the programme. However, making full use of existing alternative evaluation methods (e.g. peer evaluation) could make the system even more effective.

2.7. Examples of excellence

1. Social Partner Council: The council is well established and stakeholders are committed to the programme and its further development. The university is commended for the institutionalised involvement of stakeholders in programme evaluation and further development.
2. The Library serves as an inter-generational meeting place in the city. It is fully accessible and offers child care as an additional service for young parents.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ŠU and PU should together with Social partners should try to find a way how to provide scholarships for students to attract them to work for the local/regional public sector. This could be done by:
 - a. Creating a scholarship system;
 - b. Marketing the Service in Public Service – What does it mean/bring to work in public service;
 - c. Publicising the benefits of working in public sector (during the Bachelor's study).
2. The study programme management should try to attract a balanced group of students. At this time the study programme is more attractive to students from abroad than for local students. This problem is also visible in group of students admitted in Czech Republic. Explore ways to attract students from Czech Republic to register in PU and more Lithuanians to register in ŠU to meet the need for regional experts.
3. The role of social partners should be extended to seeking their assistance in:
 - focusing the content and sharpening the profile of the programme marketing the MA programme (including via social media);
 - providing work experience for students who do not work in public sector;
 - publicising the benefits to career progression for MA graduates.
4. All new teachers should be required to complete a qualification in Teaching & Learning, Assessment and e-Learning.

IV. SUMMARY

The joint study programme commenced in September 2014 as a full-time programme and was intended to prepare specialists for local public bodies. Experience to date shows that the programme attracts more foreign than local students who will after graduation not serve in Lithuanian public service.

The aims and intended learning outcomes of the study programme *Regional development and governance* are clearly defined and are appropriate for a Master's degree. The programme aims and learning outcomes are available on the university's website for all students and other interested parties to see. The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market.

The Department of Public Administration has adopted an approach of seeking constant improvement and relevance in the MA programme.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies (Master's degree) as defined in the descriptor of the study field Public Administration approved by the Minister of Education and Science in July 2015. They are also consistent with the learning outcomes for second cycle degrees of the European Qualifications Framework and the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework.

The name of the programme, *Regional Development and Governance*, its learning outcomes, its content and the qualification offered (Master's degree in Public Administration) are all compatible with one another. The programme would benefit from a decision of who the target group is and an adoption of courses to that group, whether domestic or foreign students.

The curriculum design meets all the legal requirements for a Master's degree. It has 120 credits, 30 credits for thesis and 72 compulsory credits for field of study courses. The criteria of at least 25% of the volume of the joint study programme to be spent in partner higher education institutions is also met. All the students spend one of four semesters at the partner university. The study (work) load is separated evenly during the whole time of study (4 semesters per 30 credits). First three semesters are also even in courses distribution – 5 courses per semester. The fourth semester is dedicated to the preparation and defence of the Master's thesis. This is assessed by teachers from both universities.

The teaching staff are qualified (almost all have PhD) and fully committed to assisting their students. There was some concern among staff that ŠU was issuing only 1 year contracts to those whose contracts expired recently. This needs to be addressed as it could cause the loss of valuable staff.

While ŠU shows a strong commitment to the development of its teaching staff, the review team recommends that a mandatory requirement for all new lecturers to gain a qualification in Learning & Teaching should be introduced.

The number of teachers is adequate and most of them are doing research which is relevant to the Programme and to topics of master theses. It would help if the Master theses would be more focused on the regional scope of development and governance.

The premises and facilities are adequate as the department and the programme moved to new premises closer to the main campus of ŠU. The programme does not demand much in the way of equipment but teaching rooms are well resourced. The library is very good especially in regard to data-bases and electronic journals which the students can access from home.

There are some arrangements for student practice as students can participate in projects with social partners. But unfortunately, due to the rigid programme design caused by its internationality there are only some limited possibilities for internships.

The admission requirements are well founded with provision for students who have not studied Public Administration to gain entry on completion of bridging courses. These arrangements must be implemented to safeguard academic standards.

Only a few students have undertaken mobility programmes (other than to the partner university). While the mobility in joint study programmes to the partner university is a mandatory part of the study, with prescribed courses, this cannot be a mobility in the way it is by students studying in a normal degree programme. The students should use the possibility to choose another one university for mobility. This “facultative” mobility offers them a better opportunity to specialise, what can be very helpful for their further career. Ways of addressing this deficiency are needed, possibly including internships abroad.

The arrangements for programme management are sound. There are regular surveys of student opinion and social partners are also surveyed. Currently students and social partners are involved in the improvement processes. The review team believes there is scope for social partners to contribute even more by way of marketing the programme to encourage more applicants (numbers have been disappointing to date) from Lithuania that would enter the local public service.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Regional development and governance* (state code – 628N70001) at Šiauliai University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	4
6.	Programme management	4
	Total:	22

*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:	Prof. Dr. Frank McMahon
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Dr. Christine Leitner
	Dr. Tomáš Černěnko
	Doc. Dr. Regimantas Čiupaila
	Ms Janine Wulz

**ŠIAULIŲ UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
REGIONŲ PLĖTRA IR VALDYMAS (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 628N70001) 2016-12-22
EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-254-1 IŠRAŠAS**

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Šiaulių universiteto studijų programa *Regionų plėtra ir valdymas* (valstybinis kodas – 628N70001) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	4
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	4
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	4
6.	Programos vadyba	4
	Iš viso:	22

* 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

Jungtinės studijų programos nuolatinės studijos pradėtos vykdyti 2014 m. rugsėjo mėn. Pagal šią studijų programą rengiami vietos viešojo sektoriaus specialistai. Patirtis rodo, kad šią studijų programą labiau renkasi užsienio nei vietos studentai. Todėl baigę studijas jie nepasilieka dirbti Lietuvos viešajame sektoriuje.

Studijų programos Regionų plėtra ir valdymas tikslai ir studijų rezultatai aiškiai apibrėžti ir atitinka magistrantūros studijų lygmenį. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai skelbiami universiteto tinklalapyje – juos gali matyti visi studentai ir kitos suinteresuotosios šalys. Studijų programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai atitinka akademinis ir (ar) profesinius reikalavimus, visuomenės ir darbo rinkos poreikius.

Viešojo administravimo katedra nuolat siekia tobulinti magistrantūros studijų programą ir didinti jos svarbą.

Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai atitinka magistrantūros studijų rūšį ir pakopą, kaip apibrėžta Viešojo administravimo studijų krypties apraše, kurį 2015 m. liepos mėn. patvirtino švietimo ir mokslo ministras. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai taip pat atitinka Europos kvalifikacijų sąrangos ir Lietuvos kvalifikacijų sąrangos antrosios studijų pakopos reikalavimus.

Studijų programos pavadinimas Regionų plėtra ir valdymas, studijų rezultatai, turinys ir suteikiama kvalifikacija (Viešojo administravimo magistro laipsnis) dera tarpusavyje. Pageidautina, kad studijų programoje būtų išskirtos tikslinės grupės ir pagal jas būtų parengti dalykai vietos ar užsienio studentams.

Programos sandara atitinka visus magistrantūros studijų teisinius reikalavimus. Studijų apimtis yra 120 kreditų, baigiamajam darbui skiriama 30 kreditų, 72 kreditus sudaro privalomieji studijų krypties dalykai. Taip pat vykdomas reikalavimas, kad ne mažesnė kaip 25 % jungtinių studijų dalis būtų vykdoma partnerių aukštosiose mokyklose. Visi studentai vieną iš keturių semestrų studijuoja partnerio aukštojoje mokykloje. Studijų darbo krūvis paskirstytas tolygiai (4 semestrai po 30 kreditų). Per pirmuosius tris semestrus dalykai taip pat paskirstyti tolygiai – 5 dalykai per semestrą. Ketvirtas semestras skirtas magistro baigiamojo darbo rengimui ir gynimui. Jį vertina abiejų aukštųjų mokyklų dėstytojai.

Dėstytojai aukštos kvalifikacijos (beveik visi turi daktaro laipsnį), yra atsidadę ir padeda studentams. Kai kuriems dėstytojams kelia rūpestį tai, kad ŠU sudaro tik vienerių metų darbo sutartį su tais dėstytojais, kurių darbo sutartys neseniai pasibaigė. Šį klausimą reikia spręsti, nes universitetas gali netekti nemažai aukštos kvalifikacijos darbuotojų.

Nors ŠU skiria daug dėmesio dėstytojų kvalifikacijos kėlimui, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja, kad būtų įvestas reikalavimas, pagal kurį visi nauji dėstytojai privalo turėti kvalifikaciją (mokymosi ir mokymo srityje).

Dėstytojų skaičius pakankamas. Dauguma dėstytojų dalyvauja moksliniuose tyrimuose, susijusiuose su magistrantūros studijų programa ir magistro baigiamojo darbo temomis. Pageidautina, kad magistro baigiamasis darbas būtų labiau susijęs su plėtra ir valdymu regioniniu mastu.

Patalpos ir įranga tinkamos. Katedra buvo perkelta į naujas patalpas arčiau pagrindinių ŠU rūmų. Studijų programos dėstymui nereikia daug įrangos. Auditorijose yra daug mokymo išteklių. Biblioteka turtinga, ypač gausios duomenų bazės, yra elektroninių žurnalų. Studentai šiais ištekliais gali naudotis iš namų.

Yra parinktos praktikos vietos. Atlikdami praktiką studentai gali dalyvauti socialinių partnerių projektuose. Tačiau dėl griežtos studijų programos sandaros (programa yra tarptautinė) stažavimosi galimybės yra ribotos.

Priėmimo reikalavimai pagrįsti. Pagal juos į šią studijų programą gali būti priimami ir viešojo administravimo nestudijavę studentai, pabaigę išlyginamąsias studijas. Tokia tvarka turi būti įgyvendinta laikantis akademinų standartų.

Tik keli studentai dalyvauja judumo programose (kitose nei partnerio aukštosiose mokyklose). Kadangi studentai, studijuojantys pagal jungtines studijų programas, privalo dalį studijų laiko praleisti partnerių aukštosiose mokyklose, tai negali būti prilyginama studentų judumui, kuris vykdomas pagal įprastas studijų programas. Studentams turi būti suteikta galimybė išvykti studijuoti į kitus universitetus. Esant tokiai galimybei studentai galėtų specializuotis – tai būtų labai naudinga jų profesinėje karjeroje. Reikėtų ieškoti būdų, kaip skatinti dalyvavimą judumo programose. Galbūt reikėtų rengti stažuotes užsienyje.

Imamasi priemonių studijų programos vadybai gerinti. Nuolat rengiamos apklausos siekiant sužinoti studentų nuomonę. Taip pat rengiamos socialinių partnerių apklausos. Studentai ir socialiniai partneriai dalyvauja programos tobulinimo procese. Ekspertų grupės nuomone, socialiniai partneriai galėtų dar labiau didinti programos žinomumą, kad būtų pritraukta daugiau norinčių studijuoti lietuvių (nes iki šiol jų buvo labai mažai), kurie dirbtų vietos viešajame sektoriuje.

<...>

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. ŠU ir PU kartu su socialiniais partneriais turėtų ieškoti būdų įsteigti stipendijas studentams, skatinant juos įsidarbinti vietos ar regiono viešajame sektoriuje. Šio tikslo galima būtų siekti:
 - a. sukuriant stipendijų sistemą;
 - b. populiarinant darbą viešajame sektoriuje ir aiškinant, koks tai darbas;
 - c. skelbiant darbo viešajame paslaugų sektoriuje privalumus (studijuojant bakalauro programą).
2. Peržiūrėti studijų programos vadybą ir subalansuoti studentų grupes. Dabartinė studijų programa labiau patrauklesnė užsienio nei vietos studentams. Ši problema aktuali ir kalbant apie šios studijų programos studentus Čekijoje. Ieškoti būdų, kaip pritraukti daugiau čekų studentų į PU Čekijoje ir daugiau lietuvių į ŠU Lietuvoje, kad būtų patenkintas regiono specialistų poreikis.
3. Socialiniai partneriai turi atlikti didesnę vaidmenį:
 - plečiant magistrantūros studijų programos turinį ir profilį, populiarinant studijų programą (naudojant ir socialinės žiniasklaidos priemones);

- suteikiant darbo patirties studentams, nedirbantiems viešajame sektoriuje;
 - supažindinant magistrantūros absolventus su karjeros galimybėmis.
4. Reikalauti, kad visi nauji dėstytojai būtų įgiję kvalifikaciją mokymo ir mokymosi bei vertinimo ir nuotolinio mokymosi srityse.

<...>

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

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė,
parašas)