



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Mykolo Romerio universiteto
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS "SOCIALINIS DARBAS SU VAIKAIS IR
JAUNIMU"**
(*valstybinis kodas – 6281JX003*)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF "SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH"**
(*state code -6281JX003*)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Mykolas Romeris University

Review' team:

1. **Damien Courtney (team leader)** *academic,*
2. **Doc. dr. Marju Medar,** *academic,*
3. **Prof.dr. Skaidrite Gutmane,** *academic,*
4. **Evelina Kripaitė,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator -

Ina Marija Šeščilienė

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

Vilnius
2017

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Socialinis darbas su vaikais ir jaunimu</i>
Valstybinis kodas	6281JX003
Studijų sritis (studijų krypčių grupė)*	Socialiniai mokslai (<i>Socialiniai mokslai</i>)*
Studijų kryptis	Socialinis darbas
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Antra
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (1,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Socialinio darbo magistras (socialinių mokslų magistras)*
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2014-08-02

* skliaustuose nurodomi nauji duomenys, kurie pasikeitė nuo 2017 m. sausio 1 d. įsigaliojus Studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose sąrašui bei Kvalifikacinių laipsnių sąrangai.

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Social work with children and youth</i>
State code	6281JX003
Study area (Group of study field)*	Social sciences (<i>Social sciences</i>)*
Study field	Social work
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second (Master)
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time – 1.5 years, part-time -2 years
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Joint Master of social work (Joint Master of social sciences)*,
Date of registration of the study programme	12-08-2014

* in brackets new data provided, valid from 1 January, 2017 after List of study fields and groups of study fields Framework of qualification degrees came into force.

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. Background of the evaluation process	4
1.2. General.....	4
1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information	4
1.4. The Review Team.....	5
II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS	6
2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	6
2.2. Curriculum design	14
2.3. Teaching staff	15
2.4. Facilities and learning resources	20
2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment.....	22
2.6. Programme management	26
2.7. Examples of excellence	28
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	29
IV. SUMMARY.....	30
V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT	33

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 December 20, 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 following main stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team to the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

Based on 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 is evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area is evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

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

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. No additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit.

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

The study Programme is being implemented in a higher education institution, i.e. in Mykolas Romeris University (MRU), which is a public institution and an international university located in Northern Europe. The university was established in 1990 by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. It was registered on 22 December 1997. The autonomy and activity of the University is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Higher

Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, and on the University Statute. The second-cycle study programme of *Social Work with Children and Youth* (hereinafter referred to as Programme) is administered in the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work (SER p. 1).

The Self-Assessment team was formed to analyse the implementation of the programme and to prepare the self-evaluation report.

The present review has been carried out under the guidelines and procedures of SKVC. Conducting an evaluation of the Study Programme, the External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of December 20, 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The initial stage included the preparation of the self-assessment report by the University. This was read and commented on by the team of experts, after which the team visited the University on 8th December 2017. During the visit, the evaluation team had the opportunity to discuss the Programme with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers. The evaluators visited the library, offices, teaching space and facilities related to the Programme.

After the visit, the expert group held a meeting for discussing and amending the content of the evaluation report to represent the opinion of the whole group. They subsequently communicated extensively during a protracted period using modern media to complete the Report, having considered the revisions proposed by MRU and the comments of the SKVC Commission.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was assembled according to the *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 8th December 2017.

1. **Mr. Damien Courtney (team leader)**, *Fellow Emeritus CIT, Former Head of Faculty, Business and Humanities, Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland.*
2. **Prof. dr. Skaidrite Alma Gutmane**, *Professor, Rector, Latvian Christian Academy, Latvia.*
3. **Doc. dr. Marju Medar**, *Associate Professor, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia.*
4. **Ms Evelina Kripaitė**, *Student, Sociology and Criminology, Study Programme, Vilnius University, Lithuania.*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The second-cycle study Programme of *Social Work with Children and Youth* is provided jointly by Mykolas Romeris University and Riga Stradins University (RSU) (Latvia), and is administered by the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work at MRU. The implementation of the Programme is ensured through close collaboration between the two Universities, which intellectually enriches the teaching staff and international students. Implementation of the Programme takes place in close collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare (LV) / Ministry of Social Security and Labour (LT), the Association of the Local Governments and Municipalities, and the Association of Social Workers. This collaboration provides the opportunity for consultation between the involved institutions and for responding to topical issues relating to children and youth. The international environment and the team of teachers and students enrich both sides (SER p. 13).

The Study Programme provides second cycle university education in the field of Social Work that complies with European standards and prepares specialists who are highly qualified professionals in Social Work, who are able to provide individual assistance to young people in difficult life situations; to pursue initial prevention in order to identify risky youth behaviour early and reduce the risk of negative consequences; to communicate and cooperate with the family/guardians of young people as well as with national and municipal institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the community in solving youth policy issues; to develop the personal and social competences of young people. Research shows that social work with youth includes not only the solution of youth social problems; it is also social activity directed toward the public and professional integration of young people in order to reduce the marginalization of youth. Social work with youth requires an interdisciplinary understanding determined by the multipolarity of the youth target group (SER p. 1, 9). The study Programme *Social Work* is designed as a full-time studies Programme (1.5 years). The learning outcomes are reflected in the self- evaluation report statement.

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

The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes are based on the Dublin second cycle Descriptor, the European Qualification Framework, the Lithuanian and Latvian National Qualifications Framework, academic and professional requirements, and are linked to the Lithuanian and Latvian state strategies and labour market needs.

The Study Programme is based on the need for social workers in Lithuania and Latvia. The aim of the Programme is formulated on the basis of the Description of the Social Work Study Fields. The Programme aim is formulated by combining the knowledge of abilities required for social workers' professional activities with knowledge and skills acquired for working with children and youth as well as for conducting research. This knowledge and related activities are demonstrated in the evaluation report (SER p. 8) and by members of the administration, teaching staff, alumni and partners during the visit. They confirmed that the goals of the social work study Programme are achieved, i.e. to prepare high-level specialists who can professionally react to social problems of recent years in Lithuania and Latvia. Not all of the alumni, however, had worked in social work.

Some graduates of this Programme are not directly working in social work, but in a field related to social work and others are pursuing doctoral studies. It is acknowledged that a university cannot influence the career path of a graduate, especially from an international group in times of globalization. *The Career Centre of the university provides guidance on employability and career planning to students* (SER p.25). (Meetings with administration and teaching staff, students, alumni and partners).

Programme aims and expected learning outcomes correlate with academic and professional requirements and meet the Description of Procedures for Development of the Professional Competence of Social Workers.

The aim of the study Programme is to prepare social workers, who are able to empower a person, group or society to develop professionally through reflection and to be able to act independently. The study Programme is based on the integration of knowledge and abilities necessary for social workers who work with children, youth and families in developing activities in child and youth day centres; in improving the quality and effectiveness of social work with children from families at risk; in developing education for life, information and career guidance services for

children and youth; in improving the quality of social work with migrants; and in developing children's care homes in the context of deinstitutionalization.

The Programme aim and learning outcomes comply with the requirements for masters studies.

Students are able to prepare for independent research work, or for other types of work which require scientific knowledge and analytical abilities.

The Programme learning outcomes comply with the requirements indicated in the *Descriptor of the Procedure of Professional Competence Development of Employees of the Social Service Area*.

This is valid for the aspects of general, specific and professional competences; and the aspects of specific requirements for the qualification category of a social work expert; as well as defining the purposefulness of the training of second cycle specialists. All that knowledge - Programme courses, study materials and related activities are presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 4-13) and by the members of teaching staff, students, alumni and partners during the visit. (Meetings with administration and teaching staff, students, alumni and partners).

One question is how a student can achieve the required level and learning outcomes by theoretical studies alone, especially one that has not a first level social work qualification?

Special attention should be paid to students who have not completed first cycle university studies in social work but in a related study field. Bridging studies and opportunities for additional consultation with lecturers are available for these students along with practical tasks and an assignment implemented in the practice field. **But more attention needs to be paid to the improvement of all students' analytical skills and the use of scientific literature is necessary.**

The *Social Work Study Programme* matches the aim and learning outcomes of the study programme, and displays the knowledge and awareness of prospective specialists, and areas and conditions for the application of special and general abilities. The programme learning outcomes are in compliance with the *Description of the Lithuanian and Latvian*

Qualifications Framework level 7 which accord with the Dublin Descriptors of Study Cycles, and correspond to the qualification of the study field - Masters' degree in social work and the qualification of social worker.

The preparation and improvement of the Programme is based on international and national documents from Lithuania and Latvia, which have influenced the design of the programme curriculum. Graduates of the *Programme* will have career opportunities in all kinds of socio-educational service institutions which provide different social services for children and youth. Graduates will be able to design, implement and develop modern social work strategies in the international labour market, not only in Lithuania and Latvia but elsewhere too. *Programme* graduates, as qualified social work specialist with children and youth, will be able to achieve their career functions: in children and youth day centres, especially working with children and youth from families at risk; in juvenile justice institutions as providers of social services for delinquent children and youth; in implementing youth policy in municipalities; in improving the quality of social work with migrants; in developing career guidance services for children and youth; and in developing universal multifunctional centres. **All of this knowledge and related activities are presented in the evaluation report (SER p 5-12) and confirmed during the evaluation visit by members of the administration, teaching staff, alumni and social partners. But the poor quality of the students' Masters' theses and weaknesses in the curriculum design show that the goals, the learning outcomes and the required criteria of the social work study programme are only partially realized. The aims and learning outcomes of the *Social Work Study Programme* are in compliance with the type and cycle of studies, and with the level of qualification, but a longer study period to the study Programme would facilitate the addition of Social Work Theories and Methods, and Professional Practise with youth, children and families, and reach a higher level of learning outcomes. Professional practise is strongly recommended for students who have not undertaken a first level Social Work education.**

It is acknowledged that the quality of students' Masters' theses in many cases depend on the individual abilities of a student and that study Programme staff make a great effort to advise and support them. However, the monitoring of research needs to be strengthened. The Review Team recommends that a thesis plan should be agreed between the teacher/supervisor and the student following a strictly scoped time schedule which is signed off by each of them. This should be strictly adhered to subsequently. The quality of the thesis should benefit from increased mutual

dialogue and stricter timeline cooperation. The Review Team is convinced that 1.5 years for full-time students who have not completed first cycle university studies in social work is insufficient for preparing a good level Masters' thesis. They should be comparable to those of other university Masters' theses.

After further, considerable reflection the Review Team is of the opinion that the learning outcomes and the curriculum design need improvement. The learning outcomes depend on the curriculum design. The two areas are closely interwoven. The Programme aims and learning outcomes, and Curriculum design meet the established minimum requirements but are considered to be *satisfactory* rather than *good*.

The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes are related to the state strategies, labour market needs and demand for social workers in Lithuania and Latvia.

The Programme learning outcomes are based on research analysis that show an increasing need for qualified social work specialists. Different surveys and analyses are mentioned in the evaluation report (The Survey, Children's day care centre activities, their provision of social services and the assessment of their development of a feasibility study, 2015; The *Report* of the *State Audit* of 2012; the Quality of Youth Policy Ratings in 43 Municipalities, 2016). They show the increasing need for social work specialists, who are able to develop and offer services for children, youth and families. They also revealed the demand for the development of children's day care centres, social services networks and an improvement in services accessibility in the municipalities. It is anticipated that the *deinstitutionalisation of children's care homes* will result in the creation of new services and the expansion of existing municipal services as an alternative to institutional care. **It is evident that there is a demand in Latvia and Lithuania for the education of social workers with a specific knowledge of working with children, youth and families.** Information about this need for social workers is presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 9-10) and reported during the evaluation meetings with administration, teachers, alumni and social partners. **It is evident that there is compliance of the Programme aim and intended learning outcomes with academic and professional requirements, as well as social and labour market demands.**

The Programme aims and learning outcomes are in compliance with the mission, aims and strategy of the higher education institution. The Programme aims and learning outcomes

are clearly defined and publicly accessible. The *Programme* aims and learning outcomes meet the requirements for University studies and Level VII qualifications. The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualification offered are compatible with each other. The aim and learning outcomes of the *Programme* are aligned to the missions and strategy plans of the Universities SER p. 13). **The *Programme* aims and learning outcomes are based on academic and professional requirements, public and labour market needs in Lithuania, Latvia and elsewhere.**

Programme goals and objectives are consistent with the missions, goals and strategies of Mykolas Romeris University and Riga Stradins University.

The *aim* of the *Programme* is to develop a Masters' Programme with high personal and professional competence in social work that enables graduates: to work at an intercultural level with children and youth; do research while analyzing children's and youth social problems; be able to organize social work services and their provision, by finding the most effective solutions to these problems; moreover – will be able to continually reflect on and evaluate their professional activities, and provide opportunities for an improvement in their performance.

Implementation of the Programme takes place in close collaboration between the Ministry of Welfare (LV), the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (LT), the Association of the Local Governments and Municipalities, and the Association of Social Workers. This collaboration provides the opportunity for consultation between the involved institutions to respond to topical issues related to children and youth. The international environment and team of teachers and students enrich all.

The Joint Programme offers diplomas from the two universities in a European and international context. The use of the English language is good for Erasmus and foreign students.

There is good collaboration between Lithuanian and Latvian colleagues through discussion; communication using IT facilities and Skype; networking opportunities through time in organisations and other activities in each other's countries.

The goals are based on EU experiences and are compatible with other study programmes, e.g. to educate graduates that are able to apply acquired knowledge and skills to working in an international environment.

Critical thinking, team work, comparative analysis, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, the application of theoretical social work paradigms to working with children and youth are the essential learning outcomes of the Programme. This *Programme* is interdisciplinary and unites social work, educology, pedagogy and intercultural communication, which helps to deepen an understanding of the reasons and consequences of social problems and to apply different social work strategies in various contexts. This interdisciplinary approach to social work with children and youth is what characterizes the uniqueness of the *Programme* (SER p. 12-13). **The Social Work Study Programme is related to the mission, operational objectives and strategy of the higher education institution and this is understood by all its stakeholders.**

Correlation between the Programme title, learning outcomes, content and the qualification awarded.

The Programme title, aim and learning outcomes comply with the activities of social workers as defined in *Lithuanian and Latvian Classification of Occupations*; they comply with the definition of social work indicated in *Law on Social Services* (2015). Teachers have good qualifications and innovative teaching methods. There is cumulative assessment during each semester. Students receive their marks at the end of the semester. There are admission and selection criteria for students. Bridging courses (12 credits for Social Work theory and practice, Social Work methodology) for entrants from other areas.

The Programme title, aim and learning outcomes clearly indicate the nature of the specialists acquired abilities and their future activities.

This approach is presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 7-9) and confirmed at the meetings of administration and teaching staff during the visit.

Involvement of stakeholders in the quality assessment process and the improvement of aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

The aim of the *Programme*, learning outcomes and study subjects are reviewed and specified following changes in the legal acts, academic and professional requirements, societal and labour market. The views of students and social stakeholders are expressed and taken into account during events organised by the Study Programme Committee. The Strategic Plan includes how the quality of courses should be monitored. Members of both states are represented in the Study Programme Committee. The social partners' involvement in the improvement of the *Programme* is based on their active and continuous participation in its implementation – social partners have been included in the Commission for the Defense of Masters' Thesis. Students and social partners are involved in the Study Programme Committee. Learning outcomes are reviewed annually and, if necessary, amended following the recommendations of students, employers and national/international partners. The learning outcomes were adjusted after taking into account the recommendations of expert and stakeholder assessment and proposals. The Programme is oriented toward student competences, working with children, youth, and their families; student managerial competence development and the ability to organize and implement projects that extend the capabilities of ensuring social welfare for children, youth and their families (SER p. 29, 33; Meetings with administration, students, alumni and social partners).

Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are publicly accessible.

The aim of the *Programme* and the intended learning outcomes are accessible to the public: on the websites of Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System/AIKOS. The Mykolas Romeris University website lists the range of programmes on offer: www.mru.lt. The Rīga Stradiņš University website contains information on its Post-Graduate and other programmes, which provides information about Programme: www.rsu.lv. RSU has developed and published a booklet in English, “Study Social Work with Children and Youth Masters' Programme”, which includes basic information on RSU, the Programme and its application requirements. The Head of the Department of Social Work and Welfare and the Head of the Programme regularly update the information about the Study Programme, curriculum design and learning outcomes. The Programme is included in the list of International Study Programmes at the annual international education exhibition “School. Education institution”. The Programme teachers and students publicize information about the Programme, its curriculum design, the aim and learning outcomes during the Career Days in schools and in the University, and in the exhibition of studies, ‘Learning, Studies, Career’, (SER p. 4; Meeting with administration staff and students).

2.2. Curriculum design

The programme structure:

This is in line with the legislative requirements: the Programme is based on Lithuanian higher education legislative requirements, and corresponds to ERASMUS+ Joint European Masters' Programme requirements. In this sense the Programme is innovative. The Programme has been developed within the Lithuanian Qualifications' Framework and is in full agreement with the European Bologna process requirements.

This is a Joint Masters' degree study Programme developed in cooperation with Riga Stradins' University, Latvia. The implementation of the Programme is carried out in close collaboration between the two universities. Curriculum design is consistent with the level of Masters' studies according to Lithuanian State requirements. The professional specialist activity areas taught in the Programme to work with young people are highlighted in international and national documents. The Curriculum should be composed very carefully in order to comply with European legislative norms for working with children and youth. The aim of the Curriculum is oriented towards the labour markets in Lithuania, Latvia and elsewhere.

Subjects (modules) of study:

The Programme is innovative. The Curriculum is composed of theory, research practice and research work.

The contents of subjects and study methods:

During the first semester the aim is to deepen the students' knowledge and skills in a broad range of theories that social workers use to understand people in social work contexts working with children and youth; a range of issues relating to the role and nature of social policy in contemporary welfare states are considered. Courses include Theoretical Models of Social Work, Comparative Social Policy and Social Work Research Methodology.

In the second semester students are introduced to the field of social work research providing the knowledge and skills to scientifically investigate social issues through appropriate investigation strategies working with children and youth. Students are required to develop theoretical

knowledge and practical skills, and are expected to have the ability to see how theoretical knowledge is implemented in practice through a number of pertinent courses.

In the third semester consideration is given to the development of knowledge and skills in social work management and administration. Best management practices are analyzed and discussed through case studies, group exercises and examples derived from real life settings. Students develop very specific competences such as how to work in a multicultural environment, and with different groups of children and youth. The connection between different methodological approaches and interdisciplinarity is set out (Annex 2, 3, 4 and 6).

Issues related to the European Social Agenda including current processes of democracy, the welfare state and problems arising from the so-called providential democracy are covered in the curriculum.

The Review Team is concerned, however, that real integration between courses taught by teachers from the two universities needs to be improved.

The scope of the programme:

Two years full-time studies, and three years part-time, are more appropriate durations for the achievement of the aims of the study Programme, especially for students who have not completed a first cycle programme in Social Work.

2.3. Teaching staff

The teaching staff members from the assessed study programme meet the requirements provided for in the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and the requirements of the university. Teachers' qualification are compliant with intended learning outcomes. Teacher's participation in scientific research complies with their scientific research areas.

The Programme *Social Work with Children and Youth* is accomplished by twenty-four academics: six professors, fourteen associate professors, four lecturers (one of whom does not have a PhD degree). Five teachers have part-time contracts and the others have full-time ones. Nineteen teachers are employed at the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work at the Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) which is responsible for the implementation of the

Programme, and five teachers are employed in Riga Stradiņš University (RSU), the *Programme* partner. 96% of all teaching staff have PhD degrees, obtained in Educology (13 teachers), Sociology (3 teachers), Management and administration (1 teacher), Humanities (2 teachers) and Medical Sciences (1 teacher). There is only one, from the RSU who holds a PhD in Social Work. Teachers are allocated to social sciences and social work. Five teachers have Bachelor or Masters' degrees in Social Work (SER p. 17; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2).

Mykolas Romeris University and Riga Stradiņš University Teachers on the *Programme* are involved in more than 100 working groups and professional organizations as leaders, board members or experts. Such active teacher participation in various working groups and professional organizations provides additional opportunities for *Programme* development. The participation of *Programme* teaching staff in national and international activities impacts positively on improving the study *Programme* and also on the process of internationalisation. The subjects taught are enriched by European and worldwide experiences and perspectives. This information is presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 20; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2) and confirmed by administration staff and teachers during the evaluation meetings.

The teachers from both universities have different experiences of pedagogical, research and practical work, required qualifications for the achievement of the learning outcomes and assurance of study quality. The study subjects are implemented by the teachers meeting the qualification requirements for the positions.

Programme teaching staff have long-lasting experiences in the academic sphere and practical experience in social work with children and youth, or in other spheres of social work in different positions such as chief social worker at Caritas of the Vilnius Archdiocese Home Shelter for homeless people, as senior specialists at the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, as social workers in different children and youth centres and municipalities, and as psychiatrists at the Mental Health State Agency. These and other qualifications and experiences gained by the teaching staff, in parallel, in the academic and practical spheres ensure that the accomplishment of the *Programme's* learning outcomes are related to the adequate preparation of graduates for their successful integration into the labour market and the application of their study skills in practice (SER p. 18; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2).

The most used teaching methods include creative tasks, interactive discussions and team-work. All of the teachers are skilled in foreign languages. The age distribution of the teaching staff ensures knowledge transfer through the generations of teachers. All of this information is presented in the evaluation report and reported by administration staff and teachers during the evaluation meetings.

The cohort of academic staff is adequate. The ratio between academic staff and students is sufficient to provide teachers with the opportunity to deal with students individually and to support them reaching the learning outcomes (SER p. 18).

All the teachers implementing the Study Programme have experience of scientific research in the field of social sciences or professional activity in different research projects.

Teachers' scientific competence is evident in their scientific publications and research activities. The staff scientific activity relates to Social Innovations of Global Development interdisciplinary research programmes: 1) Social Technologies, 2) Improving the Quality of Life and Advancing Employment Opportunities, 3) Continuity and Change of Values in a Global Society. All teachers are active scientists who take part in national and international projects, give presentations at conferences, participate in workshops, exchange programmes and long-term visits. They were involved during 2012-2017 in several national and international research and development projects, mostly supported by the European Union or other international funds. Staff research is related to exploring such study Programme issues as family, children's rights, development, and education, youth employment and many others (SER p. 18-19; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2).

The research results are disseminated in scientific publications: monographs, studies, peer-reviewed papers, textbooks, abstracts of reports and methodological instruments. During the last five years, teachers of the *Programme* published 279 pieces associated with "*Social work with children and youth*" programme topics. Almost all teachers either alone or jointly have published at least one piece of research annually which is directly related to the subjects taught in the *Programme*. Many scientific papers are published in highly valued periodical peer-reviewed scientific journals like "International Journal of Business and Social Research", "International Journal of Collaborative Research on Internal Medicine & Public Health", "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science", "International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences",

“International Journal of Rehabilitation Research”, “Journal of Arts and Humanities”, “Journal of Education and Human Development”, “Journal of Educational Review”, “Journal of Human Dignity and Wellbeing”, and “Eurasian Scientist Society Journal”. Overall, scientific research gives teachers the opportunity to update the contents of the courses taught. At the same time students have the opportunity to be involved in research work under the supervision of teachers. All of this information about teachers qualifications and research activities are presented in the evaluation report and its annexes (SER p. 19; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2).

The evaluation report (with annexes) and meetings during the visit show that teachers working in the Study Programme have extensive pedagogical, research and practical experience, and are able to convey high-quality knowledge and experience to students, as well as their connections to social work activity.

The Department conducts scientific research, as well as implementing national and international projects.

Teaching staff use the exchange programmes ERASMUS and ERASMUS+ (every teacher of the *Programme* participated in over 10 moves on average to host institutions located in 16 countries since 2012), which provide good opportunities for academic staff to lecture at foreign Universities under contracts and to participate in international projects and conferences. MRU and RSU websites include information on opportunities to lecture at foreign universities. All of this information about teachers qualifications and research activities is presented in the evaluation report and annexes (SER p. 19; Annexes 7, 8.1., 8.2).

The qualifications of the academic staff of the Programme are ensured by applying the University systems of competition and assessment.

“The qualifications of teachers are sufficient to meet the legal requirements. 96% of all teaching staff have PhD degree. The Programme teaching staff have long-lasting experiences in the academic sphere and direct practical experience in social work with children and youth, or in other spheres of social work. The distribution of the teaching staff by age ensures knowledge transfer through the generations of teachers”.

During the evaluation meeting the teaching staff showed that they have a close connection with the teaching area.

MRU administration creates the conditions necessary for teachers' professional development.

The *Social Work with Children and Youth* study Programme is administered in the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work. The study Programme is continuously renewed and updated, responding to the needs of society and providing young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to build successful careers. According to the self-evaluation group, the current University structure satisfies the conditions for the implementation of the Programme. Clearly defined and logic-based structural links and close co-operation between all the branches and social partners ensure successful implementation of study Programmes, their regular updating, the search for resources, and the inclusion of social partners. The Programme has a Study Programme Committee, which involves social partners, alumni and students (SER p. 23-24; Meetings with social partners, alumni and students). **During the visit teachers reported that their academic work is planned in accordance with the principles of pedagogical workload of University academic and research staff. The academic workload of teachers is flexible and offers them the possibility of developing their own academic qualifications through personal research.**

The teaching and research experience of academic staff is sufficient for the attainment of learning outcomes. They are actively involved in research activity, develop their own professional qualifications and disseminate their research results. The researchers of the Department review doctoral dissertations, are supervisors for doctoral students, review scientific articles and are members of various associations or professional groups. They are organizers and participants in international events and actively participate in the activities of scientific, methodological and administrative events (Meetings with teaching staff, social partners, alumni and students).

Teaching staff are involved in many other programmes which of necessity lessens their engagement and total participation in this one.

The finite amount of resources makes it difficult for some of them to engage in exchange programmes and professional internships abroad. Many avail of scholarships provided by

the Lithuanian and Latvian Science Councils, and through their engagement in international projects.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

Teachers and students have good facilities and equipment that is appropriate for the attainment of the learning outcomes of the programme.

The facilities for studies are adequate both in their size and quality. Both universities have enough auditoria for ensuring the implementation of all of the study Programme (SER p. 21; Annex 9).

Students have good learning conditions, suitable classrooms, laboratories, practice places.

Premises (lecture rooms, seminar rooms, laboratories, student workplaces) needed for the implementation of the *Programme* are available through the university resources. For individual work with students (consultation and other needs) teachers of the *Programme* use administrative offices, pre-booked teaching rooms or work rooms at the library depending on the purpose and need of the meeting. All the auditoria at MRU have computerised teachers' work places (equipped with Microsoft Win 7, Microsoft Office 2010, Open Office and other software) where teachers may connect to the University's computer system and use lecture material which is stored on Moodle, at the University data storage and global computer network. At the University's central building where the Programme operates for the first semester there are 18 computerised auditoria equipped with specialised software and ICT tools such as special statistical software and computerised exam software. If needed, these computerised auditoria can be used for the purposes of the Programme. Computerised rooms with special data analysis software (IBM SPSS) are used for teaching research methods and data analysis. Both university libraries are available to students.

(SER p. 21; Annex 9; Visiting classrooms, lecture halls, library, other facilities).

The MRU Library is equipped according to the required standard. The quantity, quality and relevance of reading materials match the needs of students.

There are 141 computerised work places in the reading rooms of MRU's libraries. Teachers and students of the Programme use computerised work places in the library for individual work preparation, for teaching and learning. It is possible to use special software like IBM SPSS, also special rooms for group work are used for organised and independent activities of study subjects (SER p. 21; Annex 9; Visiting library, other facilities). **Teaching and learning materials are adequate and accessible. They include library resources, databases, e-study environment, Moodle** (Meeting with teaching staff, students and alumni).

The Programme provides the opportunity to study social work through modern technology and innovative teaching methods e.g. using video conferences and practice visits; supervisors give comments every time that students need advice; students can call on supervisors every time; Communications take place regularly using emails; theoretical courses through books and scientific research practice are available for students. They can communicate with their supervisors regarding their individual work using Skype. In Latvia there is one week of practice in each semester. Supervisors have good skills and are willing to help when required. The Programme schedule is very good and exams are managed well.

Students are trained in 'learning to learn' techniques.

Information terminals are available for students and teachers in the foyer and the corridors of MRU. All University related information is available through these terminals for teachers and students of the Programme.

Students have good facilities for student practice.

Both universities have adequate arrangements for student practice. It is organized according to the *Practical Training Regulations for Students of MRU* and *Regulations on Student practise at RSU*. A partnership agreement is signed between the University and the organization. The practice tripartite, *Student practical training agreement* is signed by a student, a legal representative of the organization and the Deputy Director of the Institute, and is registered in the University Register of practical training agreements. Practice is implemented according to the subject description. During practice students are supervised at University and in a field placement organization. The University lecturer, supervising the Practice, has practical experience and is a professional supervisor who has finished a training course. Practice takes

place in the last semester and its tasks are undertaken in tandem with writing the Masters' thesis. Multicultural aspects are good and provide an international environment (SER p. 21; Annex 9; Visiting library, other facilities; Meetings with teaching staff, students, social partners and alumni).

The Review Team didn't have the opportunity to visit any of the RSU facilities and learning resources in Latvia.

2.5. Study process and student performance assessment

Entrance requirements are well-founded, consistent and transparent.

This is a Joint Programme with Riga's Stradina University. Full-time studies are for 1.5 years and part-time for 2 years. Students receive a Joint Master of Social Sciences degree. There is a two step selection: 1 – Formal regulations based on Lithuania and Latvia Law. 2 – English (B2 level). In Lithuania, any student with a Bachelor degree can enter Masters' studies. In Latvia they must have a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree. If not – they must take bridging courses (one student stated that she had one year of bridging courses).

Organization of the study process ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Teachers' engagement with students from the very first day of studies is meant to focus students on research. Students go through project-based learning and are fully engaged understanding the value of research which enriches the importance of professionalization. Students reflect, cognitively invest in active participation to generate and enhance high quality learning and research through their self-belief, thus enabling them to work autonomously and with others, and to develop their sense of research competence. An atmosphere for creating collaborative learning is developed. The study Programme ensures that the institutional culture welcomes students from diverse ethnical backgrounds. The engagement of different students is not only promoted but is maintained. This kind of capital derives from a sense of belonging, from active relationships with teachers, and from successful understanding of the value of the profession.

The Programme is formed with an orientation to support students' self-directed learning. The aims and outcomes are based on competences, not on the transfer of knowledge. Theoretical conversion from teaching to learning to practice is not straightforward. Another important aspect of creating and empowering the educational environment is the interaction between teacher and student, and among students. The Programme is based on humanistic, cognitive and constructive principles of individual learning. It is based on the provision that the methods used create a didactic system and a systemic approach leading to the intended outcome (SER p. 31).

The Teachers of the Programme use various didactic methods, assessment of learning outcomes strategies and methods in order to assess and evaluate students' learning outcomes (SER p. 32 and Annex 6).

Teachers use interactive Social Work methods – social reality (interviews, group work); scientific research practice – research project; presentations (draft or research project); reflective seminars.

Lithuanian students value their time spent in Riga. They stated that they visited a lot of organizations; improved their English language skills; and found that online studies were useful. In most of the meetings it was noted that students appreciate the presence of international students and their positive impact on this Programme.

Students, alumni and experts suggest extending the duration of the Programme study from 1.5 to 2 years.

Students are encouraged to take part in scientific, artistic or applied sciences activities.

International students are involved in scientific, research activities. They include the following projects – “Lithuanian Science Council based on the implementation of child support” and “The need for the integration of critical thinking skills in the labour market”. Students were involved in these projects. Students engage in research practice. Some of the alumni participate in the activities of the Social Work Association.

Students are provided conditions to take part in mobility programmes.

Students have opportunities to participate in the Erasmus programme but most of them do not take part because of jobs and family commitments. Students have to go to RSU for half a year. This Programme is welcomed, especially by foreign students.

The higher education institution ensures proper academic and social support.

The University benefits from the European Union structural funds. Support is provided in a variety of ways: students can get scholarships, loans and use of dormitories. Organizational, psychological and also support for students with special needs is also available.

Guidance of supervisors for research and theses. Supervisors for research give guidance about the nature of social work research, they encourage students to be aware of relevant developments and innovation within the profession's field. Teachers provide contact with students through regular supervisory meetings and other types of structured communication. The frequency of such contacts is agreed between the students and supervisors at the very start of their studies. Both guidance and feedback are provided.

The system of assessing student performance is clear, public and appropriate to the achievement of learning outcomes.

Students work directly on their Masters' theses. They have seminars, research methodology theory, small group activities, individual work, discussions, presentations and reflective learning. A cumulative grade consists of four different work components which are outlined in their first class.

Professional activities of the majority of programme graduates correspond with the expectations of programme operators and employers.

Employers and social partners suggested there should be more youth orientated courses, with practice in the summertime. It is important that students are knowledgeable about governmental structures so they suggest more practice in government institutions. Partners would like to have more formal and pro-active relationships with the university.

All courses are oriented to children and youth and MRU has agreements with different institutions working with them (Annex 5). Employers and social partners are involved in a variety of ways including the Study Programme Committee, the Commission for the Defence of Master's Thesis, alumni days, round table discussions and conferences. There are legitimate reasons why practice takes place during the time of studies and why it is undesirable that all should occur in the summertime. Likewise, students have the opportunity to spend time in government institutions.

It is evident that the university has a good relationship with its social partners but more flexible cooperation based on mutual needs would strengthen the study Programme.

The programme corresponds to the state, economic, social and cultural future development needs. This Programme was developed in response to administrators who identified the need for children and youth support. The research shows that graduates have the competence to work in the Social Work areas of child and family protection.

Fair learning environment is ensured.

Consideration of gender equality and the concerns of students in special situations are considered by the university and the Programme management.

Whilst students have access to the MRU and RSU libraries they stated that they have difficulties accessing the Latvian database and passwords. The official response is that where difficulties arise they identify them and as soon as possible develop a plan to have them resolved.

Many students are working and find it difficult to reconcile work and study. This is manifested in many prolonging the time involved in writing their Masters' thesis. This is not uncommon for Masters' students in Lithuania, and is not specific to this Programme.

Students are provided opportunities to make complaints and lodge appeals in accordance with clear, public and transparent procedures.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decision-making regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme are clearly defined.

The *Programme* is designed and implemented in line with the University's strategic development and planning policies as well as meeting the standards for internal quality assurance and management. The existing 2016–2021 Strategic Activities Plan of Mykolas Romeris University includes the analysis of the current situation, definition of the goals and measures of MRU activity, a list of implementation indicators and a description of its likely impact. Strategically, the quality system is defined by the 'Quality Policy Provisions for Studies and Research' at MRU and 'Regulations of the System of Internal Study Quality Assurance' at MRU. The *Programme* is administered using an effective and well developed system which meets the requirements and high standards both of MRU and RSU. As the *Programme* is a joint one with a Latvian University it must comply with requirements of both universities which ensures that the Programme management has high standards and functions well (SER p. 28).

MRU's distinctive feature is its openness to innovations and the use of the world state-of-the-art management methods. At the end of 2012 the European Commission awarded it the ECTS Label, which signifies high international recognition for the quality of its activities attesting to the internationalization of its studies and high standard of management.

The Masters' Programme of Social Work has been awarded an International Quality Management System ISO 9001:2008 Standard Certificate (SER p. 29).

Internal quality assurance mechanisms are clear, effective and updated regularly.

Quality assurance is the responsibility of the Programme Committee which arranged an overall external evaluation involving stakeholders and alumni (i.e. labour market representatives and external experts) as a means of ensuring it. **Feedback from the stakeholders of the study Programme is collected and analysed regularly. Feedback is used to improve the Programme. All stakeholders** (teachers, students, social partners, alumni) **are involved in appropriate aspects of programme management and administration.** *Programme quality* is ensured by annual discussions of learning outcomes, review of study plans, feedback from

students, social partners, employers and other stakeholders, and by monitoring students' achievements, graduates' employability data, and opinion of the alumni. (SER p. 29).

University promotes the study programme publicly.

The aim of the *Programme* and the intended learning outcomes are accessible to the public: in the websites of Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System/AIKOS (<http://www.aikos.smm.lt>). Mykolas Romeris University website contains information on the available study programmes. Rīga Stradiņš University website contains information on Post-Graduate programmes: www.rsu.lv (SER p. 4; Meeting with administration staff and students).

Rīga Stradiņš University has published and regularly updates information about the study Programme “*Social Work with Children and Youth*” at <http://www.rsu.lv/eng/study-here/post-graduate/social-work-with-children-and-youth>. RSU has developed and published a booklet in English “Study Social Work with Children and Youth. Masters’ Programme”, which includes information about the Programme, basic information on Rīga Stradins University and the application requirements. The Head of the Department of Social Work and Welfare and the Head of the Programme regularly update the information about the Study Programme, curriculum design and learning outcomes (SER p. 4; Meeting with administration staff and students).

The rights of administrative, academic staff and students and their opportunities to influence the learning process are defined in the RSU Instructions on Studies, which are mechanisms designed to avoid conflicts, solve problems and provide effective coordination (see: www.rsu.lv RSU Instructions on Studies) (SER p. 30).

Alumni and social partners are actively involved in the marketing process.

Alumni activities directed towards the improvement of the *Programme* quality are considered to be very important measures. The Mykolas Romeris University's Alumni Association was founded in 2009 and is an active partner in developing the study Programme.

There is good cooperation between the social partners and the University. MRU is good at public relations. Students have good practice places such as Caritas, youth centres, and centres for asylum seekers.

The Review Team welcome the opportunity they had during the visit to engage with the RSU Leader of the Programme and one of their students. The process would have benefitted, however, from engagement with other RSU teaching staff and/or social partners, and may have better informed the Review Team of the quality of the relationship between MRU and RSU.

2.7 Examples of Excellence

1. The enterprise to provide a Joint Masters' Study Programme of Social Work with Children and Youth in cooperation with Riga Stradins University, Latvia, involves collaboration amongst teaching staff, international students, local governments and municipalities. The focus on Children and Youth is innovative in the European context and RSU is a pioneer in this field.
2. This innovative Study Programme complies with standards of the European Social Agenda with regard to children and youth. The Programme is actively directed toward the reduction of marginalization of young people.
3. Modern technologies and innovative teaching methods are used very effectively.
4. Quality supervision is provided for students.
5. Students have excellent learning conditions. Libraries are equipped to the highest standards.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the Programme duration be increased to 2 years for full-time and 3 years for part-time studies for the achievement of its aims and learning outcomes, at least for those who have not a first cycle qualification in Social Work. It should encourage students to use the facilities and learning resources better. This is essential for thesis preparation and delivery, and will particularly benefit students who are working.
2. The low quality of the students' Master theses and a weakness in the Curriculum design infer that research skills and the research module need to be improved. The proposed increased duration of the Programme should assist this. The best efforts of staff is acknowledged and appreciated. Students' individual abilities play a role in every study programme. However, the quality of the theses need to be comparable to those of other university Masters' programmes.
3. The Review Team recommends that a thesis plan should be agreed between the teacher/supervisor and the student, following a strictly scoped time schedule which is signed off by each of them.
4. More participation in exchange Programmes and professional internships abroad should be undertaken as a means of increasing teacher professional development, with more emphasis on Social Work issues and related qualifications in spite of many teachers availing of Lithuanian and Latvian Science Councils scholarships and engaging in international projects.
5. There needs to be more real integration between courses taught by teachers from the two universities.

IV. SUMMARY

This Joint second cycle Study Programme “Social Work with Children and Youth” provided by Mykolas Romeris University (MRU), Lithuania and Riga Stradins University, Latvia, offers a Joint Master of Social Sciences degree, with 90 ECTS. It is available for full-time studies for a period of 1.5 years duration. It ensures positive collaboration between the two Universities and an increased internationalization policy for both Universities with regard to the positive implementation of the Bologna Process. The Programme is innovative and complies with the European Social Agenda.

The Programme aim and learning outcomes are formulated on the basis of the description “Of Study Fields of Social Work” and correlate with the academic requirements. The Study Programme is based on the integration of knowledge and required competences for social workers who work with children, youth and families at risk, to improve their lives. The Programme is innovative and complies with the requirements of Masters’ studies.

Students are prepared for practice and research. However, the research part of the Study Programme is weaker than the practical one as the Programme duration is too short.

The Programme aims and learning outcomes are in compliance with the MRU mission, and students are well-prepared for the labour market. The involvement of stakeholders in reaching the learning outcomes is adequate. Social partners are actively involved in the development of the Programme.

The structure of the Programme is based on Lithuanian State legislative requirements and the Curriculum is composed of theory, practice and research work.

The aim of the Programme is to deepen the students’ knowledge and skills in a broad range of theories that social workers use to understand people in social work contexts working with children and youth. Students are introduced to the field of social work research providing the knowledge and skills to scientifically investigate social issues through appropriate investigation strategies. Students are required to develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and are expected to have the ability to see how theoretical knowledge is implemented in practice. Best management practices are analyzed and discussed through case studies, group exercises and examples derived from real life settings. The connection between different methodological

approaches, interdisciplinarity and issues related to the European Social Agenda are covered in the curriculum.

The learning outcomes and the curriculum design are considered to be *satisfactory* but need improvement. The learning outcomes depend on the curriculum design. The two areas are closely interwoven.

The Programme is formed with an orientation to support students' self-directed learning and based on competences. The Teachers of the Programme use various didactic methods, assessment of learning outcomes strategies and methods in order to assess and evaluate students' learning outcomes. There is concern, however, that real integration between teachers from the two universities needs to be improved.

The Programme is taught by 24 academics, 6 professors, 14 associated professors, 4 lecturers (3 with PhDs). Both Universities with regard to teacher qualifications have almost equal long-term experience of working in academia and in practice with children and youth. Teachers are active in interdisciplinary research, the results of which are disseminated in scientific publications (e.g. monographs, peer-reviewed papers and methodological instruments). Teachers participation in ERASMUS mobility programmes is restricted. They would benefit from more opportunities to participate in exchange programmes and professional internships abroad.

The review team evaluates the work of administration at MRU positively, because the teaching staff's workload meets the requirements of Lithuanian and Latvian legislation. Students have possibilities for online studies and the use of e-learning courses as well as the Moodle platform. The University has an excellent libraries. MRU has 141 computerized work places and students have access to any necessary databases. Teachers' work places are also computerized.

Study process organization ensures the positive implementation of the Study Programme. The system of assessing student achievements meets the requirements of higher education at a European level. The content of research practice, however, is not fully clear and students have indicated that their workload is too much for them to reach a good level of research in their graduation papers.

The Programme strategy has been developed in accordance with the MRU Strategic Activities' Plan, 2016-2021. Employers, social partners and alumni are involved in the Programme development and operation, and report that their feedback is used to improve the Programme. They would like, however, to be more fully engaged.

All courses are oriented to children and youth. MRU has agreements with different institutions working with them (Annex 5). Employers and social partners are involved in a variety of ways. It is evident that the university has a good relationship with their social partners but more flexible cooperation based on mutual needs would strengthen the study Programme.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Social Work with Children and Youth (state code – 6281JX003) Mykolas Romeris 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	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	3
	Total:	17

*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:

Mr. Damien Courtney

Team leader:

Grupės nariai:

Prof. dr. Skaidrite Gutmane

Team members:

Doc. dr. Marju Medar

Ms. Evelina Kripaite