

**Recommendations from the Expert Group
to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

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Introduction

In accordance with Order No. ISAK-2442 in relation to *The Plan of External Assessment of the Study Programmes for 2007* of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, an International Peer Assessment Team (IPAT) has conducted an Evaluation of nine programmes in the field of Education offered in six Universities in Lithuania.

The Peer Assessments were conducted during the period November 2007 to March 2008, with in-country evaluation taking place during the period 25 February to 1 March 2008. The assessment process included one-day field visits to each of the universities at which the programmes are being offered.

In its work, IPAT was guided by the “Methodological Guidelines for Experts” developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania. IPAT would like to pay tribute to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and, most especially to the Director of the Centre and to the Deputy Head of the Quality Assessment Division, for the support given to IPAT before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

These recommendations focus on general issues which came to the attention of IPAT during the course of their time in Lithuania, and, specifically, when IPAT visited the various institutions.

General Comments on the Field of Education in Lithuania

The International Peer Assessment Team was surprised to find that teacher qualification could emerge from either Bachelor’s or Masters programme.

It was also a matter of some surprise to IPAT that some of those qualifying with Masters’ degrees are qualified to teach while others are not. (This matter was not always clear even to participants on these programmes). There needs to be a clarity which will enable a clear separation between purely academic studies and those which give professional qualification. It would be best that this clarity extend to the language used to describe the various fields of study with greater precision in nomenclature.

The state does not support teachers on Master’s programmes who have already taken a five-year qualification. This excludes many who might benefit from such study. As the group in question is likely to be a declining number, consideration needs to be given at some point to extending the opportunity for advanced study to this group (given, in particular that their higher qualifications are by now quite dated).

There is a concern that the Lithuanian Education System is currently unduly focussed on the micro level and there is a concern that the macro view should also be promoted with a view to encouraging all who are involved in education from the teacher in the classroom to the professor of the university or the leaders of the Ministry in taking a broad view of the field and of the needs of the system as a whole, from a policy, philosophical and sociological viewpoint.

It is the view of those experts who came from other countries that Lithuania should examine how it can best adapt its educational system so that it encourages institutions to design their programmes, particularly those at Master's and Bachelor's levels to fit within the Bologna framework.

Comments on Specific Aspects of Education

Lithuania has made great strides in the field of Andragogy and in some areas is providing leadership in this field with widespread interest in adult education and many applying for entry to such programmes. However, there is no regulation governing this area and there is an absence of any general standards. Neither is there agreement on competences in the field. Consideration should be given to the introduction of national guidelines or regulations in this area with a view to enabling the growth of Andragogy as a profession.

Feedback to the Centre in regard to arrangements for Expert Groups

There is a need to allow space within the programme of work for reflection, writing up and proximate preparation throughout the time that is spent in-country.

In light of the fact that the current assessments are assessments of individual programmes, it would be advisable to have separate reports as much of the comment on a particular programme may not apply to another programme in the same institution. Section 20 of the current Methodological Guidelines makes it clear that such separate reporting is not required for Sections 4-7 of the Final Assessment Report (despite the fact that different programmes may have very different staffing, external links, etc.).

The current guidelines do not invite the institutions to report on the level of scholarship and research in their programmes. Consideration should be given to including such an element in the assessment instrument.

Whatever the size of a team decided upon by the Centre, it is advisable, particularly in the case of programmes which may be given restricted recognition, that the full team of experts participate in each visit.

The Centre should consider formally seeking feedback from Expert teams and also taking feedback from the visited institutions which can be forwarded to the Expert Team Leader for dissemination to the team with a view to contributing to quality improvement at the level of Assessment Teams.

The Centre should consider including in its briefing notes an overview of the Lithuanian educational system, of sufficient detail to enable new experts to take specific programmes in the context of the system.

The Centre should provide name tags for each expert to take on visits.