

***STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF PHYSICAL
EDUCATION AND SPORT IN LITHUANIA***

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1. Introduction

These general comments are based on assessment visits to KLAIPEDA UNIVERSITY, ŠIAULIAI UNIVERSITY, LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION and VILNIUS PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY. The visit period was Tuesday, October 25th to Friday, October 28th, 2007.

2. Aims and goals of study programmes

The aim of the assessed Undergraduate degree programmes is to “train highly qualified professionals in the field of Physical Education and Sport. The aim of the second-degree study programmes is to educate students’ capabilities to organize and to perform self-dependently research reasoned by science knowledge.

All programmes reflect prospects of national and regional development, demands of the labour market, interests of employers and students.

3. Analysis of programmes

3.1 Design, Content and Methods

All programmes were formally correct with respect to compulsory, elective and free chosen study subjects. Weighting of credits seems adequate and in line with other international programme providers.

Various methods of studies are employed. We recognized information methods (lecture, questionnaire, colloquium, examination), practical-operational methods (lectures, seminars), exploratory-creative methods (final thesis).

Working conditions are highly variable. We saw excellently equipped facilities with increasing research output and integration of teaching and research. However we also found examples where lack of research facilities, research activity and sub-optimal exploitation of co-operations with social partners impair optimal links between theory and practise and their transparency for students. Misbalances between general and specific curriculum content and research related elements impair links between theory and practise particular during early phase of second stage degrees.

All assessment methods seem robust and adequate.

3.2 Student Support

All Universities demonstrated significant effort to provide adequate resources for students. This effort seems to meet requirements of undergraduate internal full time and extramural part time degrees.

Numerous teachers have research degrees. Depending on facilities and research culture some teachers perform scientific research. It appears that not all teachers have published scientific articles in ISI indexed international scientific journals. Some Universities proactively promote research of international standard with increasing success. However we got the impression that other places were not fully aware of corresponding deficits and potential consequences in the context of an increasing competitive field of academic work, and impaired direct impact of ongoing research of postgraduate education.

4. Material conditions

We observed huge differences in infrastructure and working conditions. Some facilities are adequate to very good. They seem to have significantly benefited from external funds such as EU-grants. Other facilities were insufficient for any form of successful research.

5. External relations

We observed multiple links with other national and international Universities. Some members of staff are involved in external research and postgraduate assessments. However, we think that the fact that particular Master students appear not to take the opportunity to benefit from international exchange programmes needs to be carefully addressed.

6. Feedback

Feedback is provided using various and adequate procedures.

Feedback from employers on students with respect to knowledge and degree content seem constructive, relevant and in general satisfactory. Employers expressed that selected options for further co-operations with social partners are not fully exploited. Additionally there were suggestions that in all present degrees the balance between general and specific content and practical experience and transfer skills have some potential for improvement and should be carefully revisited.

7. Internal assurance of study quality

Quality assurance procedures use questionnaires completed by students, bi-annually self-assessments, analysis of results of each session and control of realisation of subject

programmes. However, it seems that not all information collected during these assessments is systematically exploited for improvement of courses and teaching methods. Impact relies partly on personal initiative of individual teaching staff.

8. Professional development

There is very limited evidence of resources for professional development of teaching staff. All meetings with teaching staff supported our initial impression that there are no real procedures in place to facilitate the career of young academics.

9. General Recommendations

We saw programmes that support regional developments with close relations with the community and social partners. Very enthusiastic staff, highly committed to students and University, delivers them.

For future curriculum design and development of both, Bachelors and Masters' Degrees, we would like to emphasise that the "Six-Step-Model" should be followed more closely. It has been established by the Tuning Program and by the AEHESIS Project (Thematic Network Project Aligning a European Structure in Sport Science). This approach should improve coherence of curricula with clear routes and links between curricula content, social needs of the job market and occupational standards. It should also guarantee consideration of all aspects of the Bologna agreement and link teaching and research activities more closely.

We strongly recommend implementing systematic procedures to support the professional development of teaching staff. We got the impression of considerable high work (teaching) loads in particular of young research active staff. Implementation of workload models that consider time resources required for research activities with respect to competitive output and re-allocation of workload should be considered. Adequate and effective working conditions that enable members of staff to develop as internationally competitive and successful researcher should be established at all universities. The latter goes in line with the requirement to stimulate international collaborations mainly with research communities in Europe.