



## OVERVIEW REPORT FOR 'PHYSIOTHERAPY' STUDY FIELD

Year of Evaluation 2015

### INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the following study programmes in the study field of **Physiotherapy** in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions at: Kaunas College (653B31004), Klaipeda State college (653B31005), Panevezys College (653B31001), Siauliai College and Vilnius College (653B30002).

The external evaluations were organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). The external evaluations were performed according to the evaluation areas and criteria: (1) Programme aims and learning outcomes, (2) Curriculum design, (3) Teaching staff, (4) Facilities and learning resources, (5) Study process and students' performance assessment, and (6) Programme management.

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for each evaluated programme and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Physiotherapy field from a general point of view.

All programmes received positive evaluation.

### OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

- (1) **Programme aims and learning outcomes** of the five programmes that were evaluated were clear and expressed at the right level compared to similar programmes and requirements elsewhere. They are in general expressed in the appropriate language and match the learning outcomes of the different study units, but some study units need further clarification to bring them into line with the aims of the whole programme. A review of current practices of the professions would help to update the learning outcomes and programme aims to better match the developing health, social and rehabilitation requirements required by Lithuania in the future. Some of the programmes evaluated appear to

have either no or very little input regarding issues that the WHO are stressing at the moment, amongst these: the care of the elderly, women's health and preventative medicine are not described or tackled in enough detail.

- (2) **Curriculum design** are presented in detail and show logical progression of the studies. In general the programmes are designed around the medical and biological models of health and health care this method of curricular/course programme presentation and development could be slowly altered to take into account the more modern approach to health care. There seems to be a lot of unguided student self study hours in all the programmes evaluated, these times could become more constructive if the teaching and learning methods and assessment were changed to better facilitate student centred learning and represent real life situations. These methods will challenge the students further to become better independent learners.
- (3) **Teaching staff** in general are highly qualified and from different professions and disciplines, providing students with expert input and variety of viewpoints however it is the opinion of the evaluation team that the staff should have a larger contribution by physiotherapists. The further internationalisation of these courses and the development of new subject within the revised curricula ought to instigate a need for further members of staff going on international teaching exchanges.
- (4) **Facilities and learning resources** varied according to the sites visited. The lacks of space, no access for students with special needs to some facilities need to be improved. The evaluating team encouraged that there ought to be more inter professional education between programmes as a means of economic saving, reducing duplication and promoting more integration in an attempt to enhance the multidisciplinary approach to healthcare. The team also recommended if there could be better sharing of resources mainly academic between the local universities, to give a wider scope to the profession. It was also noted that there is a real need for further investment both in the teaching and apparatus concerning electrotherapy.
- (5) **Study process and students' performance** assessment in general are detailed and have been prepared very thoroughly. However, the evaluation team recommends that there ought to be a variety of assessment techniques. There still is a very high reliance on closed examinations and this promotes a lot of rote learning. It is being suggested that, students' course work be assessed by different formats which in certain situations mimic real life situations, thereby helping students to apply their knowledge and skills.
- (6) **Programme management** at all the institutions visited was very good and students are involved in the feedback, however there were instances where this feedback both from the present students and alumni was not always incorporated into the curriculum.

## **MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES IN PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDY FIELD**

### **Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):**

1. It is the strong recommendation that all College or Universities of Higher education evaluated have their course programmes increased to at least 210 ECTS, the theory and the clinical components of the physiotherapy course has developed to such an extent that it is extremely difficult to teach these subjects over a three year period.
2. The programmes are in line with similar programmes in Europe (apart from the length of the course), however a more current approach to these professions as autonomous health care providers, lifelong learners and members of multidisciplinary team could be integrated in the programmes.
3. The mode of teaching could be changed to develop a more: Student centred, inter-professional and blended learning approaches to encourage further life-long learning.
4. The evaluated courses should continue to build on their present foundations; however more resources should be channelled for library and apparatus.
5. Staff should be encouraged to participate further in European Exchanges in as many different European countries possible.
6. The Colleges should employ more physiotherapists, preferably at PhD level.
7. The Colleges should include modern trends in their education to make their graduates more attractive to the European labour market.
8. The Teaching Staff all demonstrated the desire to improve the course evaluated, this motivation and their involvement must be the backbone to any suggested changes.
9. The staff are encouraging students to carry out an element of research for their thesis, however different research methods have to be included in their education and more simple apparatus to carry out this research is required.
10. An improvement has been noted, but Staff especially, have to improve their English Language skills if the Colleges are to improve the quality of the programmes and hopefully commence to offer their courses in English which could be a source of revenue for the College/University itself.

### **Strategic recommendations at national level (for the Ministry of Education and Science):**

1. It is the strong recommendation that all College or Universities of Higher education evaluated have their course programmes increased to at least 210 ECTS, the theory and the clinical components of the physiotherapy course has developed to such an extent that it is extremely difficult to teach these subjects over a three year period.
2. Increasing the length of the course might mean the merging of different colleges but it is a way that might improve the quality of these courses being offered due to the sharing of resources. This might improve the quality of the students enrolling helping to develop the programmes to a higher level producing high quality graduates that will help to improve the level of health offered to the State.

*Prepared by the leader of the Review Team*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Sacco', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Mark Sacco – University of Malta.