

Overview team leader report for Educology, Andragogy and Education programmes: November 2014

The Expert Evaluation Team (EET) comprised:

1. Prof. dr. Danny Saunders (team leader), *Emeritus Professor at the University of South Wales, United Kingdom.*
2. Prof. dr. Samuel Fernandez Fernandez, *Professor of Education at University of Oviedo, expert of National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency of Spain (ANECA), Spain.*
3. Dr. Eve Eisenschmidt, *Vice rector for development at Tallinn University, expert of the Quality Assessment Council of Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA), Estonia.*
4. Ms. Danguolė Kiznienė, *Partnerships and Project Manager at British Council Lithuania, social partner, Lithuania.*
5. Mr. Justas Nugaras, *Phd student at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania.*
6. Ms. Egle Tuzaitė, SKVC

The following five programmes were reviewed during November 2014:

Programme	Field	Cycle	Award	Credit value	Institution
Family Research	Educology	Second	Master of Educology	90	Vytautas Magnus University
Educational Management	Educology	Second	Master of Educology	120	Vytautas Magnus University
Career and Professional Counselling	Andragogy	First	Bachelor in Andragogy and Qualification	240	Vytautas Magnus University

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Educational Quality Management	Educology	Second	Master of Educology	90	Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences
Career Designing	Education	Second	Master in Career Education	90	Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences

The review documentation submitted by the five programmes located at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) and Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LE) followed the outline format recommended by SKVC. Along with the submission of appropriate SERs and annexes, the two universities were also provided with opportunities to supply additional documents both before and during the visit of the expert team. In practice three of the programmes (one at VMU and both at LEU) provided such additional evidence, with all five offered the EET access to student thesis material during the actual visits.

The overall procedure for the review involved the preparation of draft reports by individual experts, with each individual also feeding commentaries on particular themes and criteria to experts who were leading other programmes within the EET. This preparation phase was followed by a plenary meeting of the experts and administrative co-ordinator following the induction session at the SKVC offices, prior to the visits to VMU and LEU over the next three days.

The experts agreed to lead on specific questions at meetings for each programme, with all meetings being chaired by the leader of the expert team who also listed the key issues and “headlines” following discussions with the university, social partner and employer representatives. Notes from all meetings were circulated after the visit by the SKVC administrator, with the team leader’s headlines providing an aide memoire for more structured discussion throughout the final day of the review exercise - when the experts agreed scores for all criteria for all programmes. After the review week all experts contributed to the reports, which were then edited by the team leader and forwarding to the SKVC co-ordinator.

On the basis of documentation received, and discussion during meetings with a range of stakeholders, the EET recorded examples of excellence with potential for further dissemination within the higher education sector. They included:

- A unique and significant programme that serves the locality, informed by needs analysis. (VMU Family Research)

- Interdisciplinary teaching and research. (VMU Family Research)
- Involvement of social partners. (VMU Family Research)
- International links and exchanges promoted by HEI.(VMU Educational Management)
- Positive and open attitude towards improvement. .(VMU Educational Management)
- Active research and professional profiles for staff. .(VMU Educational Management)
- Bonus system for academic staff performance sponsored by HEI.(VMU Educational Management)
- International links / exchanges/ volunteering (VMU Career and Professional Counselling)
- Positive and open attitude to improvement (VMU Career and Professional Counselling)
- Active research and professional profiles for staff (VMU Career and Professional Counselling)
- A strong network of social partners (LEU Career Designing)
- Round table meetings with the alumni (LEU Career Designing)

The programmes conform to the European Credit Transfer framework and with European and Lithuanian laws and regulations. It was evident that all of the programmes were based on clear labour market needs, they were welcomed by the employers and social partners, and curriculum design met legal requirements. The EET were impressed by the efforts made by the universities and the programme teams to respond positively and relevantly to national educational and economic policies and priorities.

The team noted that the aims and learning outcomes were demanding but appropriate in terms of expecting students to carry out research, engage in international activity, whilst completing all assessments. With reference to LEU programmes in particular, the panel considered some of the aims and learning outcomes to be either overly ambitious with high levels of complexity for the learning outcomes (Educational Quality management), or generic, undifferentiated and difficult to measure (Career Designing). The EET also noted that these LEU programmes do not always support the achievement of all learning outcomes, with examples including a lack of contemporary quality management theory, in addition to inadequate support for methodological and technical skills.

The expert team recognised that graduates secured work in both governmental and non-governmental organizations, with examples of advanced and specialized employment being noted for schools, family counseling, and careers advisory support. Past students expressed consistently high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their programmes and teaching methods, and considered their programmes to be successful in preparing them for graduate employment. The workloads were considered to be adequate by current students who attended meetings with the experts, but the team concluded that in some cases learning time could be detailed more successfully in the course descriptions for assignments, research papers, exams and thesis writing.

Documentary evidence and information gleaned from discussions with students during meetings confirmed that undergraduates and postgraduates were generally being provided

with opportunities for engaging in research, supported by staff who were using a range of teaching methods - including case studies, simulations, group-work, internships and placements. The advanced use of technology based assignments was noted for VMU programmes.

There was evidence of postgraduate students working with academic staff in support of presentations at seminars and conferences, with the team urging programmes leaders to consider longer-term ambitions of some students for pursuing a doctoral degree. For most programmes, the EET also noted the additional involvement of doctoral students in teaching.

With reference to VMU, the team recognised the preponderance of generally well qualified staff who were also active researchers for most programmes, The two LEU programmes were however more problematic when considering the SKVC theme of 'teaching staff'. The EET noted that for Educational Quality management there were not enough education quality management experts, and for both LEU programmes there appeared to be a scarcity of teachers with adequate English language skills.

For all programmes there was evidence of staff participation in international and local conferences, with the submission of articles for publication.. This output was not however consistently linked to the particular curriculum areas and learning outcomes of the programmes under review. During discussions with senior management and teaching staff the EET noted that formal staff development planning and delivery tended to relate not so much to programme goals, but instead to department priorities and needs. This observation led to the recurring recommendation by the EET for devising formally managed staff development strategies at programme level.

VMU learning resources, especially manuals and study guides within subject areas, were considered suitable and sufficient for the current numbers of enrolled students. Resourcing for the LEU programmes appeared to be less extensive, with the panel commenting on the limited number of rooms for self-study, the need for more contemporary facilities for supporting group work and interactive learning , insufficient library stock and out-dated reference lists, and a lack of specific pedagogic software for some courses.

Admissions requirements for all five programmes were detailed successfully within evidence bases, although in all cases the cohort sizes were relatively small - thereby raising questions of viability when resourcing issues have to be considered. The EET encouraged further reflection on the possibility of merging some courses with very small numbers, and using e-resource applications – including in some case the use of more extensive data bases and digital tools. It should be noted that VMU staff in particular displayed a pro-active attitude towards the use of information and communication technologies in education, thereby ensuring that students are up to date with technologies used for teaching and learning.

Programme management was generally viewed as competent, with the outcomes of internal and external evaluations being used in well organised ways for enhancement and quality improvement. The management teams were viewed as implementing successful evaluation processes and systems, including the involvement of students, employers and social partners in action planning based on survey feedback. With reference to VMU programmes, the EET enjoyed in particular the positive, open and self-critical attitude of the programme team to development.

The EET listed a series of development features for each programme. Recurring themes included:

- Provide more detailed learning outcomes and curriculum design for research and evaluation methodology
- Improve the management and provision of internships
- Expand practical project work and case study analysis
- Adopt more of a managerial approach to staff development at programme level, including the improvement of language and IT skills
- Combine programmes in order to strengthen sustainability
- Detail learning time for individual tasks
- Increase the number of published articles in peer-reviewed journals
- Invest in learning and support e facilities
- Create more possibilities for student and staff internationalization abroad and at home

Finally, I would like to thank the expert team for their insightful and thorough commentaries, alongside the diligent and reliable administrative advice and service provided by Egle Tuzaitė from SKVC.

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Educology Team Leader
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