

## **Language Evaluations February 2014**

This report refers to the external assessment of five language study programmes at the Vilnius University in Lithuania by an international assessment team in February 2014.

### **Evaluation Team:**

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Prof. Zaiga Ikere, Latvia

Prof. Nikolas Gisborne, United Kingdom

Dr. Nijolė Merkienė, Lithuania

Simonas Valionis, student representative, Lithuania

### **Programmes Evaluated:**

English Studies (MA), English Philology Department, Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University

General Linguistics (MA), Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University

Language for Specific Purposes (Law) (MA), Faculty of Philology and Faculty of Law, Vilnius University

English Philology (BA), English Philology Department, Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University

English and Russian Languages (BA), Institute of Foreign Languages, Vilnius University

The evaluations were organized by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). The institutions undertook internal evaluations of the programmes and submitted Self Evaluation Reports (SER) and related documentation. The evaluation teams had the opportunity to study this documentation and subsequently conducted site visits to the institutions and then discussed each study programme and arrived at final decisions.

The evaluations were conducted according to the following main areas:

- Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes
- Curriculum Design
- Staff
- Facilities and Learning Resources
- Study Process and Student Assessment
- Programme Management.

The programmes evaluated comprised of two university bachelor degree programmes and three university master programmes. All five programmes were positively assessed.

### **Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes**

This area was rated good for all the five programmes. The review panel found programme aims to be well defined, clear and corresponding to the title and the level of the programme. In one case, the title of the BA degree was slightly misleading and the panel recommended that the title of the degree should be changed so that it would correspond to its practical applied linguistic approach. The programme aims and learning outcomes in MA programmes were strongly based on academic requirements and the quality of the MA papers was generally good. One MA programme was more specifically oriented towards the labour market needs, but for most programmes the evaluation panel recommended strengthening links with social partners and potential employers and offering more career advice to students.

### **Curriculum Design**

This area was rated good for four programmes and exceptionally good for one programme. On the whole, the review panel was satisfied that the curriculum design meets the legal requirements, the study subjects and modules are spread evenly and the themes are not repetitive. The contents are up-to-date and reflect the research strengths of the department. In one case, the up-to-date, international academic orientation of the programme was particularly good. The content and methods of the subjects are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In most cases, the progression through the program and links between study courses could be more clearly explicated to the students and more practice and working life orientation could be included.

### **Staff**

This area was rated exceptionally good for all the five programmes. For all the programmes the teaching staff was identified as one of the main strengths with strong commitment and contribution to the programme, and in some cases exceptionally strong scholarly merits. Teachers are very supportive to the students and assist them in their studies. The main areas for improvement concerned the teachers' possibilities for carrying out research on all career levels.

### **Facilities and Learning Resources**

This area was rated good for all the five programmes. Since all the evaluated programmes are delivered at the Vilnius University, the facilities and learning resources were more or less identical across the programmes. In general, the material side is being developed and has improved, including e.g. library facilities, computer technologies and the availability of computers, books and e-resources. The premises are still not entirely adequate as, for example, there is no room for consultations with students and teachers mostly have to prepare their lectures outside the department.

### **Study Process and Student Assessment**

This area was rated good for four programmes and satisfactory for one programme. The review panel found that in all cases the admission requirements are well-founded and the student support system is adequate and the assessment system is clear, transparent and understandable for students in most cases. Also student mobility and participation in research activities was often quite good, although Erasmus partners especially in English-speaking countries are lacking. In most cases the review panel also recommended that the electronic system VUSIS should be more actively used by staff members to create course websites for teaching materials, that the career opportunities should be made more visible to the students and/or that a student handbook should be developed to clarify the programme structure and aims, student progression through the programme, and career options and requirements for qualifications. For one programme the experts found shortcomings in several of these areas.

### **Programme Management**

Programme management was considered good in four cases and satisfactory in one case. Quality management systems are being implemented on the organizational level, and the programmes are regularly developed. However, student response to quality surveys is generally poor, and systematic collection of student feedback could be developed. There is stakeholder involvement in the management of the programmes, however in some cases this process can be made more transparent and visible to stakeholders. It seems that communication and managing change are weak points at the University of Vilnius more generally, and communication within the department, among staff and students, needs to be developed in most cases. In one case, the review panel felt that there is a lack of concern with making the programme successful, which shows in several of the areas mentioned.