

## **Overview Report of Rehabilitation field's study programmes (2014)**

This is a summary of the evaluation visits held in March 2014 and April 2014 on behalf of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania. This information refers to the external evaluation of seven study programmes in five higher education facilities in Lithuania by two international evaluation teams. The courses evaluated were three in Physiotherapy, three in Adapted Physical Activity and one in Health Rehabilitation through Physical Exercise.

### **Evaluation Team:**

Each evaluation team was composed of six members from four different countries. The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education of Lithuania nominated both Evaluation Teams (ETs). The March team was composed of:

- Dr. Mark Sacco, University of Malta, Malta – (Team leader)
- Prof. Arnd Krüger (University of Göttingen, Germany),
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berta Paz Lourido (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain),
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Milda Žukauskienė (Vilnius Kolegija/Vilnius College, Lithuania)
- Dalia Janušauskienė Senior Physiotherapist at Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, Lithuania (Social Partner Representative)
- Kristina Mendelienė (Student representative, Lithuania).

The April team consisted of:

- Dr Lesley Dawson, Healthcare Education Consultant, UK (Team leader)
- Em. Prof Herman, (University of Leuven, Belgium)
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Milda Žukauskienė (Vilnius Kolegija/Vilnius College, Lithuania),
- Mara Kulsa, (Riga Stradins University, Latvia)
- Dr Tomas Sinevicius. Lithuania, (Social Partner Representative)
- Mindaugas Vilius, (Student Representative, Lithuania)

### **Programmes and Awards Evaluated:**

- Adapted Physical Activity, Master of Adapted Physical Activity, (Lithuanian Sports University).
- Adapted Physical Activity, Bachelor of Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Specialist for Persons with Disabilities, (Lithuanian Sports University).

- Physiotherapy, Master of Rehabilitation, Physiotherapist, (Lithuanian Sports University).
- Physiotherapy, Bachelor of Rehabilitation, Physical Therapist, (Utena College).
- Adapted Physical Activity, Master of Adapted Physical Activity, (Vilnius University)
- Rehabilitation, Master of Health Rehabilitation through Physical Exercise (Lithuanian University of Health Sciences)
- Physiotherapy, Joint Bachelor of Physical Therapy, (Klaipeda University and Siauliai University)

**Process:**

The evaluations were organized by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and all preparations prior to, and during, the visit were organized very competently by the Evaluation Coordinator. Prior to the visits, each of the evaluated programmes undertook a number of internal evaluations and audits culminating in a Self-Evaluation Report. These reports were available to the Evaluation Teams prior to the visits allowing the teams the opportunity to review these documents. The Evaluating Teams proceeded to conduct onsite visits at the institutions involved where a number of meetings and site observations were carried out. Following these visits all ET members discussed and reported on each study programme being evaluated and, finally a document was prepared and forwarded to the SKVC. This report consisted of the observations made, comments from the meetings held, a summary, a number of recommendations made and a numerical score for each programme on the following areas:

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

**Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes**

This area was rated ‘Good’ for five of the programmes and ‘Satisfactory’ for the Bachelor’s APA programme and Master of APA programme. The evaluating teams were pleased with the well-defined manner that the programme aims were described. However, this was not so evident regarding the Learning Outcomes. Generally speaking, the Learning Outcomes could be better represented at modular/course level rather than specific to study-unit level.

In the case of the Bachelor APA programme, although some Learning Outcomes are not formulated in the proper manner, they are quite clear. Learning Outcomes in this programme have been described in a generic manner and do not clearly describe the potential of the profession. In certain instances the Learning Outcomes for this programme encroach on the job descriptions of other professions. The European Union recommends 'multi-tasking' but not to the detriment of the programme's identity. The recommendation by the E.T. was that these Learning Outcomes be reviewed by a first language English speaker who is familiar with academic writing and is able to relate them to Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework document.

In the case of the Master of Applied Physical Activity the Learning Outcomes did not match programme aims and the ET recommended a great emphasis on LOs applicable to physical education and sport.

### **Curriculum Design**

This area was appraised as 'Good' for four of the evaluated programmes and 'Satisfactory' for the Bachelor APA programme, Master of APA programme and Joint Bachelor in Physical Therapy programme. It was positively noted that all programmes had carried out major changes to their programmes as was recommended by the previous evaluating team, where programmes had been previously evaluated. The programmes reviewed by the March Team generically had two flaws; one, that they offered little with respect to specialisation and secondly, that there was no chance for any elective subjects. Regarding the Bachelor APA programme, the Evaluating Team noted that it was desirable to have more practical sessions and clinical exposure included in the study programme. There are some instances when the contents of study units seem to be included in modules that do not appear to have direct relevance to the rest of the study programme. The ET considers that a greater emphasis ought to be placed on research methods in the programme. However, it was noted that the credit value of 30 ECTS was assigned to the thesis, similar to that for the Master's programme, and this could be considered too high for first cycle level study.

Generally, all the programmes appear to have an orientation towards working within state institutions and a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and private practice ought to be encouraged. It is recommended that those programmes concentrating on the private health sector make better links with practitioners in this sector.

Regarding the Bachelor in Rehabilitation, Physiotherapy programme held at Utena College, a greater emphasis on internationalisation including foreign language skills is recommended.

The Master of Applied Physical Activity at Vilnius University and the Joint Bachelor of Physical Therapy both had issues about appropriateness, or lack of, of some programme content and it is recommended that the Joint Bachelor programme ensures parity of student experience in both universities involved.

### **Staff**

This area achieved a rating of 'Good' for four of the programmes, 'Exceptionally Good' in the Masters Physiotherapy programme held at LSU and "Satisfactory" for the Master of Applied Physical Activity at Vilnius and Joint Physical Therapy Programmes. The staff can be considered to be the main strength for all the programmes evaluated. In general, the academic staff members were considered to be highly motivated in their work and research. A good number of teachers have participated in, or expressed the desire to undergo, a period of overseas exchange however, limited English language competence appears to be a stumbling block. In the programmes evaluated, the staff/student ratio is generally low, lending itself to a better learning environment for students and the development of more competent graduates.

With regard to the Master of APA at Vilnius University and the Joint Physical Therapy programmes, it is recommended that more specialists in APA and physical therapy, respectively, are employed to ensure that students develop appropriate core professional competence.

### **Facilities and Material Resources**

This area was rated 'Good' for five programmes evaluated and "Satisfactory" for the Master of APA and Joint PT programmes. Many of the programmes have the possibility to use an e-learning system (Moodle) and some programmes are actively using this method of teaching more extensively than others. However, the main areas for improvement would be to encourage the staff and students to use different databases more actively. It was recommended that the number of e-journals is increased and, specifically to the APA programmes, that more literature in the Lithuanian language is made available.

Finally, better access to the buildings used by students, teachers and patients and clients with special needs is required, in terms of distance, size and physical accessibility.

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

This area was rated as 'Good' for four programmes, 'Exceptionally Good' for the Physiotherapy first cycle programme held at Utena College and "Satisfactory" for the Master of APA and Joint Physical Therapy programmes. The Evaluating Teams confirmed that most programmes have

admission requirements that are relevant, legal and appropriate to the programmes and levels of study concerned, although the admission requirements for the Master of APA (Vilnius) need to be more inclusive.

In general, the feedback from all the stakeholders was that the assessment process was clear, transparent and understandable for both the students and academic staff.

However, the Master of APA at Vilnius and the Joint Physical Therapy programmes, being relatively new programmes are still developing assessment processes. The ET recommended greater transparency in assessment processes and more student involvement in assessment at these universities.

There were instances where students were unfamiliar with the European Credit Transfer system and little discussion regarding the study process and any exchange programmes took place. Many students were enthusiastic about seeking employment abroad, yet the amount of internationalisation taking place in the curriculum was limited.

### **Programme Management**

Five of the programmes in this area were rated 'Good' and the Master of APA and Joint Physical Therapy programmes were rated "Satisfactory". It was noted that a lot of improvement regarding quality management have been implemented since the last evaluation, where programmes had previously been evaluated. Most of the academic members of staff are aware of their duties related to the programmes. Most of the students are aware of their responsibilities and play an active role in communicating their input into the programme management process. To improve this area further, it is being recommended that the academic staff be updated on quality management procedures and that meetings of all stakeholders are held to enable them to contribute to a shared process of decision-making.

Additionally for the programmes deemed only "Satisfactory" it is recommended that there is clearer allocation of responsibilities in the programme and for the Joint Physical Therapy programme that stakeholders continue to develop ways to ensure parity of student experience at both universities involved.

The Evaluating Teams noted that documentation for more formal procedures for quality assurance ought to be established and introduced into the study programme documents, thus improving transparency.