



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS "SOCIALINIS DARBAS"
(valstybinis kodas – 6121JX041)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF "SOCIAL WORK" (state code -6121JX041)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vytautas Magnus University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Socialinis darbas</i>
Valstybinis kodas	6121JX041
Studijų sritis (studijų krypčių grupė)*	Socialiniai mokslai (<i>Socialiniai mokslai</i>)*
Studijų kryptis	Socialinis darbas
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Pirma
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Socialinio darbo bakalauras (socialinių mokslų bakalauras)*
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2010-02-22

* skliaustuose nurodomi nauji duomenys, kurie pasikeitė nuo 2017 m. sausio 1 d. įsigaliojus Studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose sąrašui bei Kvalifikacinių laipsnių sąrangai.

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Social work</i>
State code	6121JX041
Study area (Group of study field)*	Social sciences (<i>Social sciences</i>)*
Study field	Social work
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	First (Bachelor)
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time – 4 years;
Volume of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of social work (Bachelor of social sciences)*,
Date of registration of the study programme	22-02-2010

* in brackets new data provided, valid from 1 January, 2017 after List of study fields and groups of study fields Framework of qualification degrees came into force.

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of December, 20, 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC). The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the following main stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team to the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

Based on of external evaluation report of the study programme, SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative, such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas is evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area is evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas is evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	List of facts and figures about VMU LIBRARY
2.	Info about VMU licensed databases recommended for social work studies

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

The study programme is being implemented in a higher education institution, i.e. in Vytautas Magnus University, which was established in 1922 and re-established in 1989. The first cycle study programme “Social Work” at VMU is registered following the Order of the Minister of Education and Science No. 565/1997-05-19 (renewed registration: 02.08.2001 No. 1187 (61205S207); renewed registration: 2007-02-19, No. ISAK – 225; renewed registration: 2010-02-22, No. SR-16-01-8 (612L50003) and implemented at the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS). The Faculty comprises four departments: Education, Social Work, Sociology and Psychology. The Social Work Study Programme was designed and is implemented by the Social Work Department (SWD). The Department is associated with the Social Work Competence Centre and cooperates with Distance Education, the Study Quality Unit, the Institute of Foreign Languages, the Career Centre and other VMU divisions. The Programme is implemented in close cooperation with other departments of Social Sciences and faculties of VMU: Law, Humanities, Economics and Management (SER p. 4).

The Self-Assessment team was formed to analyse the implementation of the Programme and to prepare the self-evaluation report.

The present review has been carried out under the guidelines and procedures of SKVC. Conducting the evaluation of the Study Programme, the External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of December 20, 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education), and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The initial stage included the preparation of the self-assessment report by the University. This was read and commented on by the team of experts, after which the team visited the University on 7th December 2017. During the visit, the evaluation team had the opportunity to discuss the Programme with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and social partners. The evaluators visited the library, offices, teaching space and facilities related to the Programme.

After the visit, the expert group held a meeting for discussing and amending the content of the evaluation report to represent the opinion of the whole group.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was assembled according to the *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 7th December 2017.

1. **Mr. Damien Courtney (team leader)**, *Fellow Emeritus CIT, Former Head of Faculty, Business and Humanities, Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland.*
2. **Prof. dr. Skaidrite Alma Gutmane**, *Professor, Rector, Latvian Christian Academy, Latvia.*
3. **Doc. dr. Marju Medar**, *Associate Professor, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia.*
4. **Mr. Saulius Davainis**, *Head of Social Activity Department, Republican Hospital of Kaunas, Lithuania.*
5. **Ms. Evelina Kripaite**, *Student, Sociology and Criminology Study Programme, Vilnius University, Lithuania.*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are well defined, clear, complement each other and are publicly accessible. Learning outcomes are oriented towards the acquisition of intercultural, social work process and methods, managerial, social policy and professional as well as personal growth competencies (SER p. 6). The Programme aim and expected learning outcomes are published and periodically updated in an open vocational information, counselling and guidance platform "AIKOS", on the University website and website of the FSS. The Programme staff regularly present the Programme to schoolchildren, teachers and parents during the annual "Open Doors" and "Day of Schoolchildren" events and during visits to Lithuanian schools. Information is disseminated by the magazine "Where to Study?" and the annual information bulletin "Bachelor Studies at Vytautas Magnus University" published by VMU. Students are given information about the programme aims and the learning outcomes during the study process and they provide feedback after finishing the course (SER p. 6).

The Programme aim and learning outcomes match the state, public and labour market needs, academic and professional requirements. The aim of the Programme is to prepare well-educated, open for innovations, critically thinking generalist social workers for the fast changing national and international employment market (SER p. 5), which is directly related to state, public and labour market needs. The aims of the Programme and the learning outcomes are developed on the basis of social work professional competencies and are reflected in the self-evaluation report.

The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes are related to the Lithuanian state strategies and labour market needs. The Social Work Study Programme provides basic university education in the field of Social Work that complies with European standards. The aims and the learning outcomes are related to the Lithuanian state strategies and labour market needs for educating social workers, who are able to coordinate social work processes in regions and communities, work with different client groups, organize and evaluate the changes in people's social functioning and in society, based on social justice and human rights (SER p. 5).

The mission, operational objectives and strategy of the higher education institution are related to the Social Work Study Programme and understood by all stakeholders. The Bachelor study Programme is based on a humanistic approach, which has strong connections with the concept of *Artes Liberales*, which is related to the mission and the strategic planning of the university. Human wellbeing, human rights, values and intercultural communication are the basic approaches in the Social Work profession and education. The evaluation report states that the aim of the Study Programme is to educate social work professionals for whom a human being is of inimitable value and who are able to act in permanently changing social work practice, perform social welfare research, participate in social policy formation and implementation, following principles of professional ethics. Thus, the Programme aims and learning outcomes comply with VMU mission and strategic plan (SER p. 7).

The Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes correspond to the type and cycle of studies and the level of qualifications. The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes correspond to the international and national requirements regarding the type and level of studies: Dublin Descriptors (2004), Bologna process documents, the National and European Qualifications Framework (2008), the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (2010), general requirements for Bachelor studies, descriptors of study cycles in Lithuania (2010, 2011)

and professional requirements of Social Work (2015). The Programme aim and learning outcomes also comply with international and national professional values, objectives and requirements. This includes the International Definition of Social Work as well as the national Law on Social Services (adopted in 2006, updated in 2014). The Programme learning outcomes correspond to the learning outcomes required by descriptors of the study field of social work at level 6. During the meeting, administration and teaching staff expressed a deep understanding of academic and professional requirements for social work (SER p7-8).

During the meetings with members of administration, teaching staff, alumni and social partners, they confirmed that the **Programme aims and intended learning outcomes comply with academic and professional requirements as well as with social and labour market demands.** The Programme teachers, stakeholders, students and alumni are involved in the process of achieving learning outcomes. All groups are very active and interested in good results. The Programme Committee initiates the updating of learning outcomes taking into consideration the remarks of external experts, employers, students and teachers as well as the requirements of legal documents. **The aim and the learning outcomes of the Programme are periodically reviewed. The Programme title, the intended learning outcomes, its content and granted qualification are in compliance with each other. Learning outcomes of the Programme are clearly stated, publicly available and realizable.** Information about the Programme aim and intended learning outcomes is easily accessible for students and stakeholders as it is disseminated in VMU public space.

The first cycle Social Work study Programme has been provided since 1997. It is one of the first Social Work Bachelor programmes in a Lithuanian university and it was distinguished as one of the best Social Work Bachelor Study Programmes in the journal “Reitingai” [Ratings] in 2016. SWD is a member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the European Association of Schools of Social Work, and the Eastern European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work (SER p. 4)

The Study Programme of Social Work is implemented in close cooperation with other departments of Social Sciences and faculties of VMU making the Programme flexible, dynamic, up-to-date and involving the teachers from other faculties and departments of VMU in teaching and other activities. A good example of collaboration between the departments is the *Cluster of Sociology*, where cooperation in education and research is done.

Study Programme administration and teaching staff have good international partnerships in the area of education and research, e.g. in Finland (support in teaching PhD students), in USA (Loyola University Chicago) and in other countries mentioned in Annex 11 (network, conferences); Erasmus + for student practice; international work in Africa for widening cultural perspectives; finances for scholarships to go to study abroad and for students attending national conferences.

The Bachelor programme is based on different approaches: a human based approach, a dialectical approach, critical thinking, an innovative approach and a generalist approach, which give a wide understanding of human beings and of social work with its professional instruments.

The Study Programme strongly emphasizes students' active participation in research: e.g. a critical perspective, qualitative research on the topic of dementia. Students' BA theses are written about innovative topics: community work with drug addicts; social justice; globalization and Social Work (SW) movements. Students stated in the review meeting that they have many reflections and discussions related to their research topics, e.g. discussions about the double role of SW - control and support, SW as an academic discipline in practice. Students present their practice papers in seminars.

Quality improvement is very important. Focus is on the quality of studies and activities to avoid students dropping out are a priority. A clear study Programme is presented to students at the start of their studies. Every year the Programme and the reference list of study courses is renewed. Exit service for students who defend and finish their studies is used, i.e. asking feedback about the quality of studies and the Programme.

The Study Programme benefits from good cooperation with its social partners (e.g. Caritas) and with policymakers at the ministry and municipality level, with students and alumni. Students and alumni participate in the Department's meetings. Students have seminars with alumni who come and talk about SW. Seminars for parents of disabled students and practical conferences on SW content are organized. There is also good collaboration with municipalities –a lot on seminars, conferences, training for practitioners are organized. The University has *Social Work Students' Club* and *Alumni Club* - festivals and conferences are organised together as part of the university's traditions. Alumni also supervise student practice.

VMU cooperates with other Lithuanian universities and was one of the founders of the Lithuanian Association of Social Work Schools in 2015. The SWD is a member of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the European Association of Schools of Social Work, and the Eastern European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work. The University has a good relationship with European SW schools, e.g. in Austria and the Netherlands.

The Study Programme has strong administration and teaching staff who are well informed about SW issues and related SW topics. Teachers' development is supported by the administration team (minimum 2 visits per year to South Africa, USA or Europe). Good staff teamwork is evident. Teachers have good contacts with students and alumni. Students stated in the review meeting that the uniqueness of this Programme lies in the fact that during their studies it is possible to meet with professors to discuss and solve problems as they arise. There is also good supervision.

2.2. Curriculum design

The curriculum meets all legal requirements. Curriculum design supports the process and content of the Lithuanian State Legislative standards through appropriate objectives, instructional activities, instructional field works and assessments. The Programme is structured on the basis of the legal Lithuanian and VMU documents. The Programme implementation is performed in compliance with VMU Study Regulations, Code of Academic Ethics, Rector's orders, VMU Statute (SER p. 9). It conforms with the aims set by VMU as a University of Liberal Arts. There is a strong liberal spirit evident throughout the Curriculum Design.

The aims and tasks of the Curriculum design are attainable and verifiable, the study content of the Curriculum corresponds to the awarded qualification and the title of the study programme. Study subjects, workloads, objectives, expected learning outcomes, the number of hours intended for lectures, seminars and independent study, study methods are determined for each subject.

The Programme content reflects Level 6 knowledge and skills indicated in the European Qualifications Framework descriptors. **The Study Programme meets the general**

requirements for the first cycle degree study programmes, also matches global standards for the education and training of the social work profession (SER p. 10).

The goals are related to the learning process. It is possible to accomplish the goals during the study period. The Programme covers six main areas, which are recommended in the Social Work study field descriptor. Students are provided with the latest social work knowledge and develop critical understanding of theories and social work principles (SER p. 10).

Subject topics are presented in study subject descriptions (Annex 2) together with learning outcomes, the volume of class work and independent work, forms and methods of classes, evaluation of study results and criteria. The content of all study subjects and list of references are renewed every 3 years to reflect the latest social work developments. The students are encouraged to participate in conferences together with their teachers and to organize students' conferences. This helps to create possibilities for students to get acquainted with the latest research and knowledge in the study field, develop skills for oral presentation and establish relations.

Subject topics correspond to Programme's learning outcomes. The topics of the subjects are in harmony with the learning outcomes and allow students to become aware of the main aspects that are required for social workers' knowledge, skills and values (SER p 11; Annex 14).

Scientific research work of the academic staff is closely related to the study courses they teach. Teachers are good supervisors of students' Bachelor theses. The Bachelor Final Thesis is prepared following the general order of final theses preparation and defense approved by VMU, the requirements prepared at SWD and observing the work preparation schedule. Methodological requirements for Bachelor Final Thesis are prepared taking into account Programme's aim and relevance to Social Work study field. Requirements, criteria and the Bachelor Final Thesis preparation schedule are announced publicly on the First Class (FC) information system, VMU Moodle system and are discussed with the graduating students. All VMU students have free access to the University intranet system (FC), where each Programme teacher can be easily accessed as all e-mail addresses follow the same pattern: name.surname@vdu.lt. Methodological requirements are reviewed annually at SWD meetings, having discussed the quality, results and defense of the Final Thesis (SER p. 11; Meeting with teaching staff, students and alumni).

The content of the study programme is in harmony with the stated learning outcomes.

During class work, various study methods are used: brainstorming, focus groups, project method, cooperative learning, role play, interpersonal exchange, visualizing of situations, learning-by-doing, experiential learning (seminars in VMU and outside), debate. During the meetings it was stated that students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills are developed during seminars and field practice. It was also confirmed that students' feedback regarding teaching is very high. (SER p. 12; Meetings with teaching staff, students and alumni).

Structural approach is clearly visible throughout the Curriculum design. The structure, aims and tasks of the study Programme and its Curriculum design are clear, attainable and verifiable. Curriculum design is compliant with the aims set by the Vytautas Magnus University (SER p 9-12). The study courses throughout the Curriculum and the awarded qualification correspond to the title of the study Programme. Practical internships are closely related to the content of the theory section. Practical engagement with practitioners, purposeful use of case studies and a strong liberal spirit throughout the Curriculum design are evident.

The scope of the programme: the importance of human rights in Social Work is appropriately emphasized. The topics of disability, addiction and human rights are considered in a number of subjects (Annex 2). Some study courses should be devoted to unequal conditions in the everyday life of families: the impact and experiences of class and ethnicity; the notion of "good mother" and "good father" – the impact of gender constructions.

The aims and learning outcomes of the Programme should include the globalization of society, the mobility of young people and the increasing numbers of immigrants. These topics should be more focused on international and cross-cultural issues including the consequences of migration for an aging society.

The content of the programme: a structural approach is clearly visible throughout the Curriculum Design. A course on "social workers and the politics of the middle class identity in Europe" should be included, complemented by a necessary research direction in Social Work at the University. More attention should be paid to middle class family models and family policy p

programmes which are important for Social Work in European countries. The ability to reflect on the 'normal family' should be part of a professional toolkit for social workers.

2.3. Teaching staff

The Programme teachers' qualifications are sufficient to achieve the Programme aims and learning outcomes, and are in compliance with the above-mentioned regulations. The academic staff of the Programme consist of 4 professors, 6 associated professors, 10 lecturers. The number of teachers and their qualifications correspond to the legislation and ensure proper implementation of the Programme. During the previous five year period, teaching staff have become more qualified (SER p.13).

The Programme teachers' qualifications are sufficient to achieve the Programme's aims and learning outcomes, and are in compliance with the above mentioned regulations. Teaching staff are supported by the VMU Information System Office, which is responsible for the reliable work of VMU study technology, and supplies teachers with the technological equipment necessary for lectures. The average pedagogical work experience of the Programme teachers is 15.5 years. Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well as in social work supervision. Some teachers have long lasting experience in the field of research and they teach subjects related to research methodology (SER p. 13-14).

Particular attention is paid to the qualifications of the Programme teachers supervising students' field practice. During the field practice, students have group supervision sessions that are provided in subjects *Practicum of Group Supervision 1* and *2* by professional supervisors. The competence of the practice coordinator and supervisors, tutors and mentors ensures the quality of field practice, its management and the achievement of the learning outcomes (SER p. 14).

The cohort of academic staff is sufficient. The ratio between the academic staff and students is satisfactory, which gives opportunity for teachers to approach students individually and supports the reaching of learning outcomes. The majority of students and graduates assess and consider the teachers as experienced, competent and highly qualified specialists able to maintain cooperative and respectful relations with students (SER p. 16).

Students and graduates report that teachers are generous and assist students with their academic and non-academic activities, and support them in further professional development. Students have enough time and supervision from the teachers to acquire practical skills and to discuss theoretical materials in depth. Students stated that supervisions are available for them during the study process and after graduation. Student/teacher ratio is appropriate to reach the Programme goals. Professional practice is individualized. The ratio of teachers and students meets VMU requirements and is balanced. Social Work Bachelor Final Theses in the Programme are supervised by 15 teachers. The teacher/student ratio is 1-3 students per teacher.

Distribution of teachers' workload between teaching and other activities is regulated by VMU Rector's Orders. During the visit, teachers reported that the academic work is planned for teachers in accordance with the principles of pedagogical workload of academic and research staff of the University. The academic workload of teachers is flexible and gives them the possibility of developing their own academic qualifications in the area of personal research (SER p. 14; Meeting with teaching staff).

The qualifications of the academic staff of the Programme are ensured by applying the University system of competition and assessment. VMU administration creates the conditions necessary for teachers' professional development. VMU teachers and researchers are evaluated every 5 years. Teachers keep a portfolio of their professional development which is stored at the SWD and the VMU IT system managed by the University's Research Office. The Attestation Committee formed by VMU Senate performs the evaluation of teachers and researchers' qualifications (SER p. 15).

Conditions for Professional Upgrading of Staff necessary to implement the Programme. Since 2008, VMU has introduced a system for promoting teachers' qualifications and scientific activities, which provides salary rates and bonuses according to scientific productivity and activities indicated in the annual reports of teachers. The system of development of qualifications, rewards, and opportunities for international exchange increase the quality of the studies as well as the Programme Staff's competences (SER p15).

The teaching and research experience of academic staff is sufficient for the attainment of learning outcomes. They are actively involved in research activity, develop their own professional qualifications and disseminate their research results. The researchers of the Department review doctoral dissertations, are supervisors for doctoral students, review scientific articles and are members of various associations or professional groups. They are organizers and

active participants in international, scientific, methodological and administrative events. The Programme teachers participate actively in VMU projects and develop research projects with different partners in Lithuania and abroad. During the past five years more than 25 national, regional and projects funded by the European Union were implemented or coordinated by the Programme teachers. The scope of publications based on the research activities of Programme teachers has increased over the past five years. On average, one teacher with academic qualification publishes two research articles per year in national and international academic journals. Participation in research and applied education projects has become more common, providing new possibilities for students to gain the newest evidence-based knowledge and perspectives on the most recent and relevant social work issues (SER p. 15).

The University supports the professional development of teachers with good working conditions and teachers' involvement. Teaching staff participates in conferences, seminars, courses, internships and mobility programmes, research traineeships and training, uses the Erasmus+ programme, the University Bilateral Agreements and other academic mobility measures actively. Teachers are active members of international and national Social Work organizations, which enhances their professional expertise, e.g. in the European Social Work Research Association, the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG), the National Association of Social Work with Groups (SER p15).

The Programme teachers share their expertise in a variety of ways: committees of scientific conferences, editorial boards of academic journals, publishing articles in mass media, open lectures for society, participating in TV and radio broadcasts. Since 2008, SWD publishes twice a year a journal "Social Work: Practice and Experience". The journal aims to consolidate professional identity of social work in the articles, which analyse social work professional work experiences and methods. Several international scientific events were organized by SWD in the period, 2011-2016. For example, the International Conference "Social Work for Social Development", International Summer School of Supervisors "TRUST – Building Trust through Supervision", International Congress on Supervision "Human Phenomena in Organization: Insights of Supervision" were organised in 2012 (SER p16).

In the evaluation meeting with teachers, the teaching staff showed a good knowledge into how social work theory and teaching skills are applied to SW practice. Teachers and administration, both reported good relations between team members at both administration and teaching staff level.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

Teachers and students have good facilities and equipment that is appropriate for the attainment of the learning outcomes of the programme. The Programme has been provided since 1997. General study subjects are mainly delivered in the central buildings of VMU. Since 2014 Programme subjects have been mainly delivered in the new FSS building (shared together with the Faculty of Law) with a sufficient number of classrooms and additional spaces for individual, group work and consultations. (SER p. 17). There are 83 premises for the implementation of the Programme that comply with the hygiene requirements (SER p. 17).

Students have good learning conditions, suitable classrooms, laboratories, practice places. All the classrooms that are used for Programme implementation are computerized with the necessary software. There is accessible and free Wi-Fi, multimedia equipment, and one room is equipped for video conferencing. There are a sufficient number of printers, laptops, voice recorders and other equipment in the SWD (SER p.17).

The University has agreements with many social partners for implementing student practice. A Social Work study Programme practice coordinator is responsible for finding practice places and monitoring internships. There is also a Social Work practice group, which covers different practice field issues. Students can choose the practice placements in different social work fields where the practice mentors are social work practitioners. The University has agreements with different social care organizations such as children's day care centres, disabled youth day centre, mental health centre, NGOs, social services centres, social care homes.

Students with disabilities receive social support from the university. The university environment is very friendly for disabled people. There are ramps for wheelchairs, lifts, adjusted WCs and a self-care room. The Faculty Library is equipped with special workplaces for students with special needs including such devices as special keyboards, foot switchers for transcribing texts, software and video magnifiers for visually impaired students (SER p. 17).

The Library is equipped according to the required standard. The quantity, quality and relevance of reading materials matches the needs of students. Vytautas Magnus University library ensures necessary resources (books, journals, articles, methodological materials) for the Programme implementation. Students can use more than 20 databases, which can be accessed from the library webpage and some databases can also be accessed via remote access. Mykolas

Romeris library is one of the Vytautas Magnus University branches which is in the Faculty of Social Sciences (SER p. 18).

For the development of the Social Work Study Programme several periodical and serial publications are used, also in English. Lists of facts and figures about VMU LIBRARY and information about VMU licensed databases which are recommended to the social work students were presented during the evaluation visit.

Students are trained in ‘learning to learn’ techniques. One of the strategic goals of the faculty is to cherish the dignity of a person, to foster community, respect, equity and social responsibility. This means that discrimination or intolerance is not acceptable among Faculty members. The Faculty and SWD create an open and friendly environment for people with special needs as well as for every member of the community. There is special equipment for students with a disability for their studies and for campus mobility (SER p 19).

2.5. Study process and students’ performance assessment

Entrance requirements are justified, consistent and transparent. Full-time studies last for 4 years (240 credits). Students need these exam results to be admitted: History (coeff. 0.4), Lithuanian language and literature (coeff. 0.2). Examinations or annual grades of Mathematics or Information Technologies (coeff. 0.2) and any other exam or award grade (coeff. 0.2) (SER p. 19).

Organization of the study process ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Students have introductory practice, then qualification practice in the third year and after that, they have assessment and pre-diploma practice. Students need to experience the actual social work environment, see different places and then choose where they want to practice and work. Students can engage in practice in their home cities (university coordinator of practice calls and visits practice places). Students have practical subjects and non-practical subjects (SER p. 19-26). Students have to make a presentation about their practice (written and orally presented). If students have problems in the practice place, they can go to their mentors and supervisor. Alumni noted that theoretical knowledge is a strong point of this Programme. All teachers try to help the students with their research. Students have the opportunity to write article with their teachers. “The authors of the

best final theses together with their supervisors prepare and publish articles in the journal “Social Work. Experience and Methods” and in other academic journals.” (SER p. 21).

It was stated that practical work is not possible without theoretical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge can help to explain clients’ behaviour. Students would like to have more information about client groups, psychiatry and illnesses. Students suggested that some lecturers learn from others (e.g. one lecturer gave the task to do a video; active seminars; interviews with older people; group challenges). Some lecturers – choose new methods – use videos from the internet. Alumni also suggested that meetings with Social Workers from different countries should be organized to share their experiences (Meeting with students and alumni).

Students are encouraged to take part in scientific, artistic or applied activities. Teachers ask students to read about various subjects (research area). They take some cases from PhD studies and discuss them. Students participate in the writing of articles with teachers. (Meeting with teaching staff).

Students have the possibilities to take part in the mobility programmes. However, they mostly do not participate in these ERASMUS exchange programmes. Some of the students think that it is because they do not know foreign languages, have family or work commitments (Meeting with students and alumni).

The higher education institution ensures proper academic and social support. Students get a place in the dormitory, which they describe as tidy, they have their own toilets, showers, there are friendly administrators and everything is in the centre of the city. Students have the opportunities to receive scholarships and loans (Meeting with students).

The University supports disabled students in different ways, environmental and special technologies for study as well as Moodle, and computers with Braille facilities.

The system of assessing student achievements is clear, made public and appropriate to assess the learning outcomes. Teachers use simulated practice methods, 3D games – diaries, reflections via email (created in Paris), group work – experiential learning, and role-play methods. Visual methods – movies, videos, digital storytelling (students make digital films about their practice places), special films, visuals (crisis intervention, about violence, the holocaust). Supervision methods and critical reflection (criteria – use not only personal views but also put

theoretical knowledge into practice) are used. Teachers invite people such as persons with a disability to lecture. Assessment methods include self-reflections and essays. The framework is provided by the university – accumulative grading, all assessments should be divided into parts. Students also take mid-term exams (Meeting with teachers, students and alumni).

Professional activities of the majority of programme graduates correspond to the expectations of programme managers and employers. Social partners and employers noted that it is very important that the university community is very involved in municipality activities. They do a lot of research together. Some of them stated that VMU students have very strong theoretical knowledge. Employers noted that students have skills on which to build. Most of the graduates work in the Social Work fields or in their practice institutions. Students gain knowledge on how different institutions work. University influences the students' attitudes regarding clients as discussions are held about attitude issues in the university. Students focus on what they want to achieve, they have a very serious attitude towards work, and they are highly motivated. (Meetings with students, social partners and alumni).

The programme corresponds to the state's future economic, social and cultural developmental needs. Employers noted that because of VMU graduates, the child welfare centre "Pastogė" was created. VMU is also the home for the Supervision Association. The University supports supervision as it is not registered as a profession yet. (Meeting with social partners and alumni).

Fair learning environment is ensured. Access to databases and textbooks are available for every student. Every course has its account in Moodle where there is information about lectures and reading materials. In addition, university has several libraries (SER p. 19).

Students are provided with the opportunity to launch complaints and appeals in accordance with clear, public and transparent procedures.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decision making regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme are clearly defined. The management of the Programme and quality assurance at the University is organized at several levels – by the Faculty Council, Dean, Head of the Department and Study Programme Committee.

Internal quality assurance mechanisms are clear, effective and updated regularly.

University documents regulate the Programme's management process and procedures. The University Statute, VMU Regulations on Studies, VMU Order on study Programme quality assurance, provide, define and describe the principles of quality assurance of studies and research, distribution of responsibility in study quality assurance and quality assurance processes in the development, implementation and improvement of study programmes (SER p. 27).

Feedback from stakeholders of study programme is collected and analysed regularly.

Feedback is used to improve the programme. All stakeholders (teachers, students, social partners, alumni) **are involved in the appropriate aspects of programme management and administration.** The self-evaluation report describes that the main responsibility for managing of the Programme lies with the Study Programme Committee. The Committee is responsible for the renewal of the Programme and internal quality evaluation and assurance. It is also responsible for ensuring contacts with the social partners. This was confirmed at the meeting with the social partners. The Study Programme Committee consists of 10 members, i.e. 4 teaching staff, 3 students' representatives, 2 social partners and 1 alumnus (SER p. 27). It shows that all stakeholders are included in the decision-making process. Committee meetings are held regularly and its decisions regarding studies and administration are implemented in the Social Work Department. The alumni members of the Committee conduct a focus group with 4th year students for evaluating the whole Programme. The quality assurance measures are continuously monitored and discussed at regular meetings of the Study Programme Committee and the SWD. During the meeting, it was confirmed that at the end of each semester students individually complete questionnaires, electronically, about the teaching in each study subject and the results of these evaluations are used for improving the teaching.

The development of the Programme was also carried out with a focus on the recommendations of previous experts. Attention was paid to the structure of the Programme, new staff recruitment, cooperation with stakeholders and attracting incoming students. Programme alumni are also invited to participate in the evaluation of the Programme (Meetings with SER preparation team, social partners and alumni).

Alumni and social partners are actively involved in the marketing process. The Faculty organizes with the social partners and alumni the Alumni Days during which they also have the

opportunity to evaluate the Programme changes and submit their proposals for improvement (SER p. 30; Meetings with students, alumni and social partners).

Students with disabilities receive social support from the university. One of the strategic goals of the Faculty is to cherish the dignity of a person, to foster community, respect, equity and social responsibility. This means that discrimination or intolerance is not acceptable among Faculty members. The Faculty and Social Work Department create an open and friendly environment for people with special needs as well as for every member of the community. There is special equipment for students with a disability to assist them with their studies and for moving across the campus (SER p. 30).

University promotes study programme on the public VMU website (<http://www.vdu.lt/en/about-vmu/important-documents/> (in English) as well as <http://www.vdu.lt/lt/apie-vdu-kaune/svarbiausi-vdu-dokumentai/senato-dokumentai/>(in Lithuanian), and all information is also available for the University community via the FC information system. These documents provide information for all stakeholders and external institutions about study quality assurance at VMU as well as helping to regulate and monitor the processes of study quality assurance (SER p. 28).

2.7. Examples of excellence

1. **Well-qualified teachers have a high standard of teaching.** Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well in social work supervision, have good research experience and English language skills. Teachers use attractive and innovative teaching methods, such as *Reflective practice; Story telling as a new SW model; Users' involvement in the learning process; Collaborative research; Participation in action research; Case management; Problem solving and critical thinking approaches; Experiential learning, Visual methods, movies and videos*. Students can create short films in placements. Disability friendly approaches are used in teaching. (Meetings with teachers, students and alumni).
2. Unique and one of the strongest elements of the study Programme is the **long-term experiences of internationalization**, experiences of how to work in international groups and transatlantic communication including writing research papers together. Social contacts/network provide opportunities for discussions. Teachers of the study Programme

participate in the European research network “*European social survey*”. Teachers are doing research at an international level and have received funding from the Horizon 2020 programme (Meetings with teachers, students and alumni).

3. **High-level organization of students’ field practice.** Students are highly motivated at different stages of the study. Students in practice are well equipped with knowledge and information (including regulations). They focus on what they want to learn during practice. In students’ opinion, teachers are using supervision and critical reflection teaching methods, which simulate the practice environment for students and provide a good opportunity to implement all their knowledge of everyday practice. Students like discussions about how to combine theory and practice. An introductory week for students is used. Students like teachers inviting practitioners to talk about what has happened in real practice (Meetings with teachers, students and alumni).

4. **The programme management meets the standards of high education.** The Study Programme is well and organized from different aspects. Programme management enjoys good relationships with the Ministry and the municipalities, and all partners are well informed about developments related to the Social Work Programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) A course on the middle class identity in Europe along with “social workers and the politics of the middle class identity” should be included. It is also a necessary research direction in Social Work at the University. More attention should be paid to middle class family models and family policy which is important for Social Work in European countries. An ability to reflect on thinking about the “normal family” should be part of a professional toolkit for Social Workers.
- 2) The need to attract more foreign teachers remains relevant in order to enrich staff diversity. Initiate new Erasmus+, bilateral agreements and international projects in order to develop the international dimension of the Programme staff in years, 2018-2022.
- 3) Expand the existing cooperation (such as with Loyola University Chicago) in order to attract more visiting teachers from foreign universities in years, 2018-2022.
- 4) The organization of in-service training and conferences should be continued. It is important to bring new competences to the region.
- 5) The international mobility of students needs to be developed. Students have the possibilities to take part in the mobility programmes. However, they mostly do not participate in these ERASMUS exchange programmes, because they do not know foreign languages, and/or have family and/or work commitments. It is necessary to evaluate students’ Erasmus mobility programme and support students` opportunities to go abroad and improve their language skills.

IV. SUMMARY

The Vytautas Magnus University is a University with a human face, a warm and positive environment, where students with special needs feel welcome. The University has a good reputation. The first cycle Social Work study Programme has existed since 1997. It is one of the first Social Work Bachelor programmes in a Lithuanian University and it was distinguished as the best Social Work Bachelor study Programme in the journal “Reitingai” [Ratings], in 2016.

The Bachelor Study Programme of Social Work is a well-functioning Programme worthy of the high acclaim from the people interviewed as well as the high evaluation of the review team. The objectives and intended learning outcomes are well-defined, clear, and publicly announced. The Programme is linked well to the state, societal and labour market needs. It is also linked with the mission and vision of the Vytautas Magnus University. The aim and learning outcomes correspond to the requirements of first cycle studies in Lithuania. The title of the Programme, intended learning outcomes, the content of the Programme and the qualification obtained are in harmony. The study Programme is presented to students at the start of their studies in a clear manner.

Curriculum design is a continuous process, where proposals for changes in the curriculum are incorporated. Critical thinking and the use of case studies, with comprehensive supervision practice and arrangements, are central to field practice in the Bachelor Programme. Regular meetings of stakeholders regarding placement practice and the practical engagement of social workers in the studies process are very positive. Students’ papers are presented, discussed and reflected upon during the practice. Students and social partners have good contact with the university and the practice places, including the municipality. Interpretative methods are used in practice.

A course on the middle class identity in Europe should be part of a professional social workers’ toolkit.

An appropriate range of first-cycle study methods and assessment instruments are used during the Programme delivery. Teachers of the Social Work Study Programme have a high standard of teaching. Teaching methods are innovative including storybooks. They use attractive and innovative teaching methods, such as reflective practice, storytelling, users’ involvement in the learning process, collaborative research and others, which are highly rated by students. The study

Programme has highly motivated students who are active at different stages and levels of the study process.

The study process is supported by different facilities and learning resources, such as effectively working IT supports, well organized study processes, student assessment systems and specialised textbooks. The study Programme has innovative methodologies for improving and for changing the study process and curriculum. There are three mechanisms in place to ensure that the Programme content corresponds to the latest academic, artistic and technological achievements: student comment and feedback; stakeholder and alumni feedback; and input from teaching staff.

The Programme is delivered by 20 teachers. Most of them have social work qualifications and a social work background, including good English skills. Programme teachers are experienced in practical social work as well in social work supervision and have good experience in research. Teaching staff is supported by the services of VMU Information System Office staff, which is responsible for the reliable working of VMU study technology. It supplies teachers with the technological equipment necessary for lectures. The age structure of the teaching staff is favourable for the implementation and development of the Programme. Motivation and enthusiasm among Programme staff is high. Teachers of the Programme are active researchers in the academic and applied area, and their research output is demonstrated in different national and international peer reviewed journals. Programme staff demonstrate outstanding professional pedagogical development, mobility, internal and external co-operation. The EU, VMU and the Science Research Council support research and participation in international conferences. Teachers are strong in teamwork, they are warm and engaging, and share a strong culture of dialogue with their partners.

The Programme is supported by a good university structure and a wide range of high-quality resources including physical facilities, data-bases, software programmes, simulation licenses, subscription to case-study repositories and the like. The Library is well-equipped and offers access to the majority of internationally well-known electronic databases. Different European programmes, such as Horizon 2020, are used effectively for funding research and development projects. The Vice Rector is actively involved in a UN programme.

Students enter the Programme directly after finishing school. Student admission is carried out online and all the information about the admissions process and requirements is conveniently presented on the University website (SER p 19).

VMU has introduced a system of teachers' qualifications and scientific activities promotion, which forms the basis for providing salary rates and bonuses according to teachers' scientific output.

Students and teachers receive support (Erasmus+ and other scholarships) from the University for going abroad to learn, teach and practise. The good balance of theory and practise is a major strength of this programme, which is supported by research of the study areas. The University ensures proper academic support for the students enrolled on this programme.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Social Work (state code –612L50003/6121JX041) at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	4
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	4
	Total:	22

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

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