



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
**PROGRAMOS *PRAKTINĖ FILOSOFIJA* (621V53001,
ankstesnis – 62401H103)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

EVALUATION REPORT
**OF *PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY* (621V53001, previous –
62401H103)**
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vytautas Magnus University

Grupės vadovas:
Team Leader:

Prof. dr. Krister Segerberg

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Prof. dr. Olli Loukola
Prof. dr. Tomas Kačerauskas
Prof. dr. Anna Estany
Dr. Michael Brady
Mindaugas Grajauskas

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

Vilnius
2011

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Practical philosophy</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621V53001 (ankstesnis – 62401H103)
Studijų sritis	Humanitariniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Filosofija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Filosofijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997 gegužės 19

INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Practical philosophy</i>
State code	621V53001 (previous – 62401H103)
Study area	Humanities
Study field	Philosophy
Kind of the study programme	University
Level of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full – time (2)
Scope of the study programme	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of philosophy
Date of registration of the study programme	19 May 1997

© Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras
The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	4
II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS	4
1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	4
2. Curriculum design	4
3. Staff	5
4. Facilities and learning resources	6
5. Study process and student assessment.....	6
6. Programme management	6
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	7
IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT.....	8

I. INTRODUCTION

The programme being evaluated is the Masters in Practical Philosophy at Vytautas Magnus University. The aim of the programme is to educate students in Practical Philosophy at the Masters level and to enable them to become specialists in classical and contemporary philosophy. The programme of Philosophy is managed by the Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, with input from Faculties of Political Science and Law, the Department of Lithuanian Language, and the Centre for Foreign Languages.

The expert panel met administrators of the Faculty, the authors of the self-assessment report, academic staff, students, and employers. The panel asked questions and received feedback from all of the groups. The self-assessment report provided a suitable basis for the evaluation. The panel members were shown the teaching rooms, computer facilities, and library. The panel would like to thank all involved at VMU for their hospitality and consideration.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The panel thought that this was an original programme, and one of clear value. Most of the aims and learning outcomes are well-defined, clear and publicly accessible. The last three ILOs are rather vague, open-ended and difficult to assess, however. This is in contrast with the others, which seem much better. Some members of the panel thought that the ILOs do not make it explicit precisely what practical philosophy *is*. There were, that is, some worries about the name of the programme. The self-assessment document did explain that the point of the programme is to focus on the practical mastery of skills and the application of philosophical thinking and argument to other areas, rather than the deepening of philosophical knowledge itself, and so there was a practical aim in this sense. However, it wasn't clear why the phenomenological method (say) was particularly valuable for mastery and application of such skills. More could be said, for instance, about why philosophers are particularly good at this sort of thing. In addition, it might be thought that learning how to apply philosophy in other disciplines can itself be of great value in deepening and enhancing philosophical knowledge. Perhaps this could be highlighted, at no detriment to the main focus of the programme, and perhaps might be more helpful than a focus on interdisciplinarity. (In other words, the practical application and deepening of philosophical knowledge are not incompatible.) Finally, some panel members thought that although the title and focus was suitable for the purposes of the programme, the curriculum design needs more work or a better formulation if it is to achieve these aims.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on academic requirements, although there was no real explanation of how the particular needs of society and professional challenges motivated a change in the programme content. Perhaps the Department could think some more about this. The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered.

As mentioned, the panel were somewhat concerned about the name of the programme. The nature and value of practical philosophy could, therefore, be more helpfully spelled out. Similarly, and as mentioned, there was some worry about the match between the programme aims and the content of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

+ The programme is original and of clear value.

- Some of the aims and learning outcomes are vague and open-ended.
- It is not obvious what practical philosophy is.
- The value of practical philosophy needs to be more clearly spelled out.

2. Curriculum design

The panel thought that the curriculum design was on the whole good. There is a good spread of subjects and the themes are not repetitive. Moreover, the subjects are consistent with the level of study, and are appropriate for the achievement of the learning outcomes. The panel did think that the programme might have a broader outlook, to include more scientific topics (rather than simply those in social science and the humanities) and to think of methods of applying philosophy to social science that go beyond the phenomenological.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- + There is a good spread of subjects and the themes are not repetitive.
- + The subjects are consistent with the level of study.
- The curriculum has few scientific topics.
- The curriculum should include methods that go beyond the phenomenological.

3. Staff

The study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements, and the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. There are 6 full time professors – 3 full professors, 3 associate professors. All are experienced and research-active, and involved in research directly related to the study programme. Elective courses are taught by staff from the faculty of social science, which makes sense given the focus of the MA. The staff have a wide range of research interests. Staff attend international conferences and participate in international events.

The number of teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes. As above, the teaching is divided between staff in Philosophy and the Faculty of Social Science, which seems sensible. As with most other universities, the staff have a reasonably high workload; the University should keep in mind the negative effects this can have on learning and teaching if workload is too heavy over a long period. Staff turnover is fine, and ensures an adequate provision of the programme.

The panel thought that there could be clearer descriptions of formal support structures in the self-assessment document, although noted that VMU *does* have some of these in place. For instance, VMU creates conditions to raise staff qualification, provides some funds for participation in international conferences, and there is a welcome system of monitoring of colleagues lectures, and discussion of student feedback amongst staff. All of this is praiseworthy.

The panel although thought that there might be more discussion of employer feedback, especially given the focus of the MA on the application of philosophy to other areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- + Staff are experienced and research active.
- + Staff are involved internationally.
- + Good support structures for staff.
- Workload is reasonably high.
- There should be clearer descriptions of formal support structures for staff.

4. Facilities and learning resources

The premises for learning and teaching seem to be suitable and adequate for their purposes. There is sufficient number and availability of lecture rooms and seminar rooms for various kinds of audiences, they are mostly well located, and their quality enables efficient and productive teaching and learning. The facilities are provided with appropriate teaching and presentation equipment, and the computer equipment available is sufficient for the present teaching purposes. The library collections seem to be of good European standard, and students and staff are provided access to the central electronic databases and philosophical publications. The panel did note that electronic subscriptions might be a possible solution if there are periodic shortages of textbooks; and the panel also thought that certain Lithuanian philosophical journals were lacking.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- + Facilities and equipment are suitable, adequate and sufficient for the purposes of the program.
- + Library collections and electronic databases are appropriate.
- There is periodic shortages of textbooks and lack of certain Lithuanian philosophical journals.

5. Study process and student assessment

The panel thought that in general this was good, although noted that only one MA student was present at the meeting with students, and as such there was a lack of representation and feedback on the day of the visit. The meeting with graduates was more helpful, and the panel got the impression that the programme gave good grounds for future study and research. The graduates suggested that there be more training in professional writing on the programme, and the panel is happy to make this recommendation. On the negative side, it was not clear that the Department provides sufficient information to undergraduates and postgraduates about future academic study and research; perhaps the Department might like to think of ways in which this could be improved.

An important point of improvement concerns the student mobility and exchange. The department has only a small number of international exchange universities, and the existing contracts are not efficiently utilized in MA-program (only two students have spent an Erasmus-exchange term abroad since 2005). International cooperation at university level is impressive (236 universities), yet this cooperation does not seem to extend to the MA-program. There are no incoming or outgoing students mentioned in the self-evaluation report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- + The graduates value the competencies given by the programme.
- More training should be provided on professional writing skills.
- Improvements are needed within international cooperation, especially in mobility and exchange.

6. Programme management

The programme management was in general good. There are clear structures in place for improving the programme, although the panel thought that the evaluation and improvement processes could involve students and stakeholders to a larger extent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- + Monitoring of the implementation of the programme is clearly allocated.

- + Data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analyzed.
- The outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are not used enough for the improvement of the programme.
- The evaluation and improvement process does not involve enough the students and stakeholders.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) The Department should think about how to improve student mobility and exchange. It is vital to be able to offer the students high-quality exchange universities, which are carefully selected to strengthen achieving the study goals of the program.
- (2) The Department should think about providing more training in professional writing.
- (3) The Department should think about how the distinctive value of the programme can be best advertised and promoted.
- (4) There could be more student involvement at all levels of the programme, but especially in setting the goals and planning the programme. Student feedback could be utilized more efficiently at all levels of the programme.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Practical Philosophy* (state code – 621V53001, (previous code – 62401H103)) is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by fields of assessment.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	18

*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.

Grupės vadovas:
Team Leader:

Prof. dr. Krister Segerberg

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Dr. Michael Brady

Mindaugas Grajauskas

Prof. dr. Tomas Kačerauskas

Prof. dr. Olli Loukola

Prof. dr. Anna Estany Profitós