SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto

PSICHOLOGIJOS **PROGRAMOS (valstybinis kodas 612S10005, 61206S103)**

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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EVALUATION REPORT

OF *PSYCHOLOGY* (state code 612S10005, 61206S103)

STUDY PROGRAMME

at Vytautas Magnus University

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Doc. dr. Lena Adamson
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Vilnius
2011

Studijų programos pavadinimas	*Psichologija*
Valstybinis kodas	612S10005, 61206S103
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Psichologija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (4), ištęstinė (6)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240 ECTS
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Psichologijos bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19, įsak. Nr 565; perregistruota: 2001-08-02, No.1187; perregistruota: 2007-02-19, No. ISAK – 225; perregistruota: 2010-02-22, No. SR-16-01-8

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INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	*Psychology*
State code	612S10005, 61206S103
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	Psychology
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Level of studies	first
Study mode (length in years)	full time (4), part time (6)
Scope of the study programme in credits	240 ECTS
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Psychology
Date of registration of the study programme	1997-05-19 Order 565; renewed registration: 2001-08-02, No.1187; renewed registration: 2007-02-19, No. ISAK – 225; renewed registration: 2010-02-22, No. SR-16-01-8

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I. INTRODUCTION

Vytautas Magnus University has been offering undergraduate programmes in psychology since 1991 and registered in 1997 as a BA programme. The quality of the programme was assessed first in 2001, and accepted by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in 2002. The programme was modified in 2009 and updated in 2011.

The present review follows the guidelines and procedures of the SKVC. The University provided a self-evaluation report before the expert team visited the University on October 18[th,] 2011. This visit was carried out in conjunction with the evaluation of a master programme for which a separate report has been prepared. During the visit, the team had the opportunity to discuss the programmes with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, graduates and employers. They also visited the library, offices, teaching space, language laboratory and laboratories associated with the programme.

After the visit, the expert group held a meeting in which the contents of the evaluation was discussed and amended to represent the opinion of the whole group.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcome

This programme follows a liberal studies model requiring students to complete general coursework in philosophy, social science methodology and other topics outside of psychology, i.e., introductory knowledge into many aspects of our culture. However, the main aim of the programme is to provide basic competences necessary for further, specialized studies in psychology, and to develop competences necessary to work with children and adults in various settings. The competences are consistent with those required by further (BA) studies and qualify for psychology assistant jobs. The programme aims are well defined, based on public needs and the needs of the labour market. The aims of the programme and leaning outcomes are accessible for the public. It is important to emphasize that in order to conduct psychology practice, further (MA) studies are needed. Despite the unique (to Europe) curriculum format, the aim of the programme conforms to both Lithuanian legal requirements for a BA and Europsy requirements. As the comments above indicate, the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other.

The programme (as other BA programs in Lithuania) lasts four year (i.e., longer than in the majority of European countries and not in compliance with the 3+2+3 Bologna model), therefore the time spent in elective courses do not interfere with the to-be-acquired competences in the field of psychology. Beside the preparation for studies in professional psychology, a general aim of the BA programme is to prepare for conducting psychology research. Courses in psychological research methodology, however, are optional rather than mandatory.

Learning outcomes at the site visit were evaluated by inspecting a sample of theses. It revealed a great variety of quality (i.e., the sample consisted of both high and low quality examples with

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regards to methods and analyses). The expert team concluded that mandatory training in psychology research methods would lead to an improvement of the average level of theses.

In sum, the aim of the programme is to provide basic competences necessary for further, specialized studies in psychology, and to develop competences necessary to work with children and adults in various settings. The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on academic and professional requirements, the needs of the public ant the labour market. The aims and outcomes are well defined and accessible for the public. The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and qualification offered corresponds to each other. The competences are consistent with those required by further (BA) studies and qualify for jobs as psychology assistants. Mandatory training in research methods would be helpful in further improvement of the theses. It is important to emphasize that in order to conduct psychology practice further (MA) studies are needed. The articulation of learning outcomes is a true strength of this programme at both programme and course levels.

2. Curriculum design

The programme consists of two stages. The first stage (years I-II) is dominated by common university subjects and electives (as required by a liberal studies model). In the new curriculum, introduced recently, there are more specific (psychology) subjects even at the first stage. The second stage (years III-IV) concentrates on subjects of academic and applied fields of psychology. This is one of the possibilities of proper curriculum designs in psychology BA.

In the programme, there are 28 obligatory psychology subjects, which currently seem to be well-sequenced and inclusive overall. Health psychology may be slightly over-represented in the 4 elective courses and other areas of study, such as forensic or psychology of internet-addiction, that students would enjoy are lacking but, given programme size and resources, the course structure is adequate. The balance among courses is good and not repetitive. As previously noted, however, more emphasis on subject-specific research methodology, academic writing and analysis would improve the curriculum. 4 electives are currently included in the curriculum. Practice is included and it is more or less integrated with courses, although students did indicate the necessity of more practices. Such opportunities appear to be integrated into courses to some extent, but more systematic practice in observations and reflections might improve the theory-to-practice connection and make students feel that they are involved.

The courses specific to psychology are supplemented by a set of courses in the English language, and the students may also choose 5 courses from a variety of offerings in various fields of science, art, humanity, management and ecology. This aspect of the curriculum design provides a wide scope on cultural values, and is a commendable solution.

The set of teaching methods (lectures, seminars, practices) are in matching to the international standards.

In general, the curriculum is generally well balanced, but more emphasis is needed on the biological basis of psychology and on research methodology.

In sum, the curriculum design meets legal requirements. The scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. The curriculum contains the main fields of psychology (academic and applied). The teaching methods and the course contents are appropriate. Overall, the content reflects the latest achievements in science and professional psychology. The study

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subjects and/or modules are spread evenly and their themes are not repetitive. However, a strong recommendation is to make psychological research methodology mandatory and also to include more content on the biological basis of psychology. Technology is well utilized and current. More integration with partnership with Nebraska University at the BA level through joint web courses, collaborative student projects and guest lectures via Skype would be a significant contribution to the internationalization of the curriculum.

3. Staff

There are 29 persons listed as members of the teaching staff. The qualifications of the staff are proper; the majority holds degrees (PhD) in psychology. Some PhD students are also involved in teaching. The teachers' age distribution is also appropriate for ensuring high quality learning outcomes; the majority of the staff members are between 31-50 years. The student/instructor rate is proper for high standard education. Turnover in the staff is rare. The university provides enough time for developing professional knowledge. Recently a staff member on professor level was appointed. The programme now fulfils the legal requirements.

However, there are two shortcomings to be mentioned. First, research activity of the staff members requires considerable improvement. Using a rather low criterion, only five staff members listed international publications in the field of psychology. Second, professional competences of the staff are not well-balanced. Teachers have high levels of experience in many fields of psychology, but experts in experimental fields, like cognitive and affective psychology, or developmental psychology, would contribute to the scientific interest of the students and the publications and research of the staff.

In sum, the staff consisted of qualified experts. In some fields teachers are needed with research that would contribute to international scientific activity and up-to-date contents in experimentally oriented fields of psychology. However, even in the present form, the staff is capable of providing high-level education.

4. Facilities and learning resources

The lecture rooms are properly equipped. At present, the office and work space is rather limited. The existing laboratory room is unsuitable for modern experimental work and there are no facilities for observation practices. Computer facilities for statistics and demonstrations are available. However, as a promising and necessary project, psychology studies will soon be conducted in a new building, where proper laboratory space, observation rooms and offices will be available. At present in the faculty building a modern language laboratory is available, but psychology students hardly ever use it. In the library a considerable number of data bases (e.g. PSYCHARITCLES, MEDLINE) is available (including full texts), and other appropriate sources are available not just on campus, but to the university community from wherever they are. This could be complemented in future by some major sources for full-access journals and e-books in psychology. The number of modern textbooks is only moderate in the library, but the majority of the textbooks listed were edited after 2000.

In sum, a considerable development of work space is needed but new building projects will satisfy these needs within the immediate future. A better use of the sophisticated language laboratory is recommended to both students and staff. A considerable number of data bases are available both on and off campus for students and teachers. However, these could be

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complemented somewhat by additional resources. This also refers to printed journals and textbooks. However students expressed they were satisfied with resources.

5. *Study process and student assessment*

Admission to the programme corresponds to the legal requirements. As shown by the admission rate, as in the majority of the European countries, admission to this psychology BA is very competitive.

On the limits of available facilities (see point 4) the study processes are well organized, students have access to the available resources, therefore organization of study processes are adequately match to the desired learning outcomes.

The students are aware of the methods of quantitative assessment and their opportunities to obtain comments from the teachers. According to the opinions in the meeting with the students, they are satisfied with the assessment methods. Teachers were trained in a workshop on assessment methods. In case of disagreement with the results of assessment, there are possibilities for discussion, and detailed evaluation of the results. Students evaluate the courses on a regular and formal basis (a questionnaire constructed by experts).

The quality of theses is variable and a closer relationship between the topics of the theses and teachers' research fields is recommended. This way the students would be more closely involved into higher quality research activity.

The students remarked that an improvement of financial support would be beneficial. However, as we understood, it is beyond the possibilities of the university.

Students' mobility is rather low. This is mainly due to the financial situation within the Erasmus framework. If there are possibilities for the university to give further financial support (in addition to Erasmus scholarships) this may enhance the number of students taking advantage of the opportunity to go abroad.

In sum, the admission methods are well defined, and correspond to the requirements. Assessment methods are proper, and the students are aware of the requirements. Students have the opportunity to discuss their results and they have possibilities to evaluate the courses. It is necessary to find ways for increasing students' mobility.

6. *Programme management*

A programme committee is responsible for the management and decisions. Not only teachers and students, but also employers (stakeholders) are involved into this committee. A separate committee is dealing with the development of the programme. The quality of the education is supervised by an independent committee of the University (Centre for Quality Studies). In every academic year the programme committee presents information to the faculty management, In this complex structure both the external and internal evaluation of the programme is satisfactory. The input to the programme development committee is the assessment form (i.e., students' opinions) and the opinion of the staff. Formal attempts have been made to obtain information about the programme from stakeholders, but the rate of responses was low, i.e it resulted only in limited success. However, informal contacts with stakeholders are frequent. The management structure

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is well-formed, and the cooperation among the various committees and the communication with the staff and students is effective and efficient.

In sum, the formal structure of the programme management is proper, the programme management gets internal input from the students and from the staff, and also external input enough for improving the programme. Responsibilities for decision are allocated in a transparent manner. Monitoring of programme is adequate. On the whole, the programme management is excellent.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Increasing the mobility of the students is highly recommended. Teaching more courses in English may facilitate the motivation for studies abroad. It seems to be important to investigate how credits from studies abroad can be integrated into the programme. Student mobility would probably also increase if the University could find ways for additional financial support for students participating in Erasmus projects and other mobility activities.

3.2. Involvement of teachers conducting active research on experimental fields would be beneficial for the programme. This way the scope of research fields and students'involvement in research can be improved.

3.3. Increased use of the very sophisticated language laboratory and the facilities for video-conferences by psychology students would be advantageous.

3.4. Considerable improvement in laboratory space is needed. This should be remedied in the future building project.

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IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Psychology* (state code – 612S10005, 61206S103) 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)	4
	Total:	**19**

*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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