



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO
KOMUNIKACIJOS MOKSLŲ PROGRAMOS (62409S103)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES (62409S103)
STUDY PROGRAMME
AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY**

Grupės vadovas:	Prof. Steven Knowlton
Team Leader:	
Grupės nariai:	Dr. Baiba Holma
Team members:	Prof. Peter Neijens
	Prof. Hans Beentjes
	Dainius Radzevičius

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Komunikacijos mokslai</i>
Valstybinis kodas	62409S103 (naujas kodas - 621P90002)
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Komunikacija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais ¹	80
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Komunikacijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

¹ – vienas kreditas laikomas lygiu 40 studento darbo valandų

INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Communication Sciences</i>
State code	62409S103 (new code - 621P90002)
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	Communication
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level of studies	Master
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2 years)
Scope of the study programme in national credits	80
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Communication
Date of registration of the study programme	19-05-1997

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following analysis is based on the self-evaluation report from the Communication Sciences Programme, plus site visits and interviews with relevant stakeholders conducted in Vilnius on the campus of Vilnius University during the week of 28 November-3 December 2010.

Prior to the site visit by the team, staff from the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education provided team members with electronic copies of the self-evaluation reports. In accordance with the suggestions made by CQAHE staff, at least two team members reviewed and commented upon the programme's SAR. In the case of this programme, as well as that of the other four communications faculty programmes the team evaluated during the same site visit, the two initial readers were selected based upon their especial professional expertise. The comments from these two initial readers were combined by the team leader into a combined preliminary report, which was circulated electronically to all members of the team. The preliminary report contained initial tentative assessments of the various aspects of programme quality, consistent with the methodological guidelines of evaluation, which were also distributed electronically to the team prior to the visit. The preliminary report also contained questions raised by the reading of the SAR and provided a valuable guideline for questions and queries for the entire team to put to the SAR preparation team and other stakeholders during the visit.

Team members found the schedule of meetings to be valuable and as efficiently scheduled as possible, to make maximum use of the limited time the team had to conduct its work. University administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders were invariably gracious and helpful in answering questions from team members. It is noteworthy that an excellent simultaneous translator was provided for those interviewees who were more comfortable communicating in Lithuanian.

In the case of this programme, and of the other programmes the team evaluated during the same site visit, it must be said that the ET (Experts team) had to cope with some serious problems. First, the programmes overall appear to be in a state of flux, with significant changes in place since the SARs were completed, rendering the information in the SARs much less useful than would have been the case otherwise. Second, the SARs did not address all criteria in the protocol, leaving team members with too little information as a base from which to begin. A related third problem was that the protocol asks for massive amounts of data, which tends to overwhelm, rather than enhance genuine programme evaluation. And fourth the team was asked to evaluate five programmes in only four days. Many of the meetings are largely set pieces and little truly substantive information can be gleaned. Overall, the committee of experts had to rely on their judgment to give priority to some criteria at the expense of others. The majority of the team has participated in other, similar evaluations in other countries. CQAHE and university personnel were certainly cooperative, but the task was simply too large for the team to be as confident as it would like to be in some details of the assessment. That said, ET is wholly convinced that the overall conclusions as to recommendation for re-accreditation are honest, accurate and fair to all concerned.

At the end of the first day of the site visit, the team asked university staff for considerable additional statistical information concerning student-staff ratios, student graduation and dropout rates and so on for this and for the other programmes. The team would especially like to thank and commend Vice Dean Doc. Dr. Renata Matkeviciene for gathering and producing highly useful tabular data on less than 72 hours' notice.

Due to time constraints and language issues, the team did not attend any classes, but team members were given wide-ranging access to the university, its operations and its facilities.

In conducting their evaluation of the study programme, the ET has applied the methodological guidelines developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education to implement provisions of the Order No. ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister of Education and Science "On the approval of the description of the procedure for the external assessment and accreditation of study programmes" (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 96-4083),

following the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 54-2140).

The team would like to thank the staff of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and, in particular, to the Deputy Director of the Centre and to the Head of the Division for Studies Assessment, for the support given to the ET before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

The Master in Communication Sciences at the Communication Faculty of Vilnius University was launched in 1998 in response to market needs. Many communication agencies began their activities in 1998-1999 in Lithuania. The Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences was elaborated in collaboration with social partners giving consideration to the needs of a dynamic market.

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

1.1. Programme demand, purpose and aims

1.1.1. Uniqueness and rationale of the need for the programme

According to the SAR, there is a need in the market (since 1998) for professionals and further studies, whereas the majority of graduates work according to specialization (SAR, p.4). In the interview with the SAR-team, both statements were confirmed, based on personal communication with graduates and employers.

According to the SAR, the program is unique in Lithuania (SAR, p.15) but during the interview the SAR-team mentioned the establishment of a similar program at another university.

The program ranks seventh (out of 91) in popularity among applicants (SAR, p.15) The ET is positive about programme demand.

1.1.2. Conformity of the programme purpose with institutional, state and international directives

The report refers to regulations at various levels (SAR, p.4). The Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences was worked out and reviewed pursuant to the Statute of Vilnius University, Regulations for the Studies at Vilnius University and provisions of the Strategic Activity Plan of Vilnius University establishing the ambition of the University to guarantee a fundamental university education satisfying the national needs and meeting the world requirements. The programme was worked out also with reference to the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania, orders of the Ministry of Education and Science and documents of the Centre of Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

The ET is satisfied with the programme's conformity to directives.

1.1.3. Relevance of the programme aims

The program aims are to provide theoretical knowledge and skills necessary for skilled professionals in the field of communication strategy and management, as well as to prepare students for doctoral studies (SAR, p.15).

The ET evaluates both aims as relevant for society and the development of communication science.

The experts have discussed the profile of this programme vis-à-vis the International Communication programme. We could conclude that the programmes differ on two dimensions: (1) approach and (2) topic. The approach of the International Communication Programme can be characterized as more applied than the one of the Communication Science programme, which is

more theoretical. Furthermore, the Communication Science programme aims to train students in theories and research of general communication science, while the International Communication Programme focuses on corporate communication in an international context, in particular. The experts believe that the profiles of the two programmes are sufficiently different and nicely complement each other. However, students in both programmes might benefit from each other's perspectives. Therefore, the ET recommends exploration of the possibility to combine the two programmes.

1.2. Learning outcomes of the programme

1.2.1. Comprehensibility and attainability of the learning outcomes

Training and professional aims of the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences are as follows: to train highly skilled specialists who are able and capable to plan, organize, manage, value communication processes in the organization; to work out and implement communication strategy and policies; to organize internal and external communication.

Students, graduates and employers provide very positive evaluations of the programme in terms of applicability and relevance (SAR, p.7). These evaluations were supported in the interview with students, alumni and employers.

The ET would have liked to see standardized data on the productivity of the program: the number of graduates, absolute and relative to the intake (after 1.5 years, 2 years, 2.5 years and so on), dropout, etc. Still, the ET is positive about the learning outcomes.

1.2.2. Consistency of the learning outcomes

Objectives of the program are theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, and self-training skills (SAR, p.5).

The ET are positive about the aims and the learning outcomes of the program, but would have liked the report to present a table that systematically connects the learning outcome to the programme aims. Based on the SAR and our discussions with the teachers during the site visit, however, the ET has no indication that the learning outcomes are inconsistent.

1.2.3. Transformation of the learning outcomes

Every two years, having considered the opinion of students and teachers, the Committee for Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences together with the academic staff of the Information and Communication Department review the degree programme to meet with the constantly changing environment and market needs.

The ET is positive about this procedure but thinks it may prove productive to involve employers and alumni in the periodical review of the program.

2. Curriculum design

2.1. Programme structure

2.1.1. Sufficiency of the study volume

The programme consists of 80 VU-credits (120 EC), which is sufficient. Students must collect 20 credits per semester. The Master's final thesis is given 20 credits. The programme consists of 3 blocks of subjects. The first block aims at gaining knowledge and developing critical thinking by employing theories in practice. The second block is intended for the improvement of practical skills with the aim to deepen skills in communication management, organisational behaviour, crisis management, public relations and marketing communication. The third block offers an opportunity to deepen knowledge of social sciences in the areas of gender communication, policy communication and business communication. The fourth block

consists of research (term works and Master's final thesis). The volume of the programme is sufficient.

2.1.2. Consistency of the study subjects

The programme consists of four study subjects (blocks): theory, practical skills, social sciences, research. The first block of the degree programme is of a theoretical nature with the aim to encourage gaining knowledge and to develop critical thinking by employing theories in practice. The second block is intended for the improvement of practical skills with the aim to deepen skills in communication management, organizational behavior, crisis management, public relations, and marketing communication. The third block offers an opportunity to deepen knowledge of social sciences in the areas of gender communication, policy communication and business communication. The fourth block consists of research (term works and Master's final thesis). Fifteen % of the academic load consists of electives.

Methods of studies are intended to maintain active learning of students. Therefore, simulation games (mini games), and project work are employed. The majority of teachers use information and communication technologies in lectures, seminars and practical classes. To obtain research and scientific work skills students write three research works, which are to be defended.

The ET concludes that the program content and teaching methods are well thought-out and consistent.

2.2. Programme content

2.2.1. Compliance of the contents of the studies with legal acts

The contents of the study comply with legal acts. The hours in the study programme for independent work correspond to the recommended standards (approximately 600 hours per semester).

2.2.2. Comprehensiveness and rationality of programme content

SAR lists the competences to be acquired in the programme. These are directly related to the learning outcomes of the programme. In other words, the study programme is designed in such a manner that the subjects and the learning outcomes match. Furthermore, students are positive about the applicability of programme content (SAR, p.7).

A critical note is that the courses on methods and theory as described in the appendix of the SAR do not go beyond an introductory level. This might be due to the heterogeneous intake of students. The ET suggest to make an explicit choice for either a program content that builds on a bachelor in communication science, or a program content that does not require this prior knowledge. If the Faculty decides for the first option, it might be a suggestion to offer a preparatory (conversion) programme for students who do not possess this prior knowledge before entering the master's programme.

3. Staff

3.1. Staff composition and turnover

3.1.1. Rationality of the staff composition

Most (75%) of the subjects in the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences are taught by Doctors, whereas the remaining 25% are taught by teachers with the title <Doctor Habilitatus>. The majority of academic staff in the degree programme is employed at the Communication Faculty, Information and Communication Department, whereas some of them are invited scientists or academic staff from other faculties of Vilnius University.

According to the SAR, the lack of professors in communication sciences may be considered as one of significant weaknesses in the degree programme. Professors deliver lectures and conduct seminars, while their competences should be employed in supervision of students'

research. The remaining academic staff, teaching in the degree programme, has high teaching load, which hinders academic staff from engaging in research and attaining academic titles.

The ET suggests exploring the desirability of reducing the teaching load through reducing the number of contact hours.

3.1.2. Turnover of teachers

In their interview, the SAR-team stated that there is a stable core of senior teachers. On the other hand, it was mentioned to the committee during the site-visit that it was not always possible to find qualified teachers for the programme due to low salaries and a lack of financial resources. The experts consider this aspect satisfactory.

3.2. Staff competence

3.2.1. Compliance of staff experience with the study programme

Students are positive about the qualification of the staff (SAR, p.9). As regards to research activities, staff members publish in line with the programme (SAR, p.14). Teachers in the degree programme are involved in research, undertake applied science activities and publish their activity results in Lithuanian and foreign scientific journals.

Although the ET did not receive detailed information per staff member, the experts believe the quality of the staff is fully adequate.

3.2.2. Consistency of teachers' professional development

Teachers improve their practical qualification by conducting scientific research as well as by participating in international and national scientific conferences and seminars. The SAR also states that the teachers' qualifications are improved in relevant improvement courses and seminars organized by Vilnius University. The experts, however, are not convinced that this aspect is sufficiently developed. Although the University offers professional development courses in a specialized Centre (SAR, p.14), these are not for free anymore, and there was no proof that the teachers made use of this offer. Another aspect that the experts missed was the individual annual interview between teacher and management. These interviews would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the developments and performance in the past year, the plans for the coming year, and how to remedy experienced problems.

Based on the discussions with the management, the students, the alumni, the employers and the staff, the ET concludes that the staff is working very hard and has great responsibility towards the students. They are very committed to the programme and its content and the students and they have good contacts with the employers.

4. Facilities and learning resources

4.1. Facilities

4.1.1. Sufficiency and suitability of premises for studies

All auditoriums, laboratories and classrooms are located in Saulėtekio ave. There are 17 auditoriums with in sum 780 spaces. According to the SAR, there is a lack of work spaces for student group work and discussions.

At the same location, the Saulėtekis Information Centre (SIC), established in 2004, provides students and staff from the Faculties of Economy, Communication, and Law with the necessary scientific literature and satisfies their information needs. There is a reading room with 80 workplaces, 19 workplaces where laptops may be plugged in, and 23 computers with Internet connection.

The ET is positive about the facilities.

4.1.2. Suitability and sufficiency of equipment for studies

Auditoriums are well equipped with furniture. Five auditoriums have stationary multimedia equipment, 3 auditoriums have an Internet connection, and there is a portable multimedia set to be used. The E-learning and Examination Centre provides support for developing electronic tests. In addition, there are rooms where students can take the test on computers. There are over one hundred places for students taking tests at the same time.

The ET is positive about the equipment.

4.1.3. Suitability and accessibility of the resources for practical training

The programme does not include an internship outside of the university.

4.2. Learning resources

4.2.1. Suitability and accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications

In the library, computers give access to relevant databases of refereed articles and books. There is a limited amount of relevant books available at the location. More books are available in the library in the centre of Vilnius. The collection of communication books is renewed and supplemented following suggestions of lecturers.

The ET is positive about the accessibility of books, textbooks and periodical publications.

4.2.2. Suitability and accessibility of learning materials

Teachers prepare a course description that is approved by the programme committee. The description is handed out to students during the first lecture. In addition teachers more and more use the electronic learning environment to present information and assignments. The E-learning and Examination Centre support teachers using the electronic learning environment.

The ET is positive about the accessibility of learning materials.

5. Study process and student assessment

5.1. Student admission

5.1.1. Rationality of requirements for admission to the studies

During the analyzed period (2003-2007) the number of students in general admission increased (SAR, p. 13). The number of students who indicated that Communication Sciences was their first priority was 32 in 2007. Applicants take an entrance examination. Despite this examination the group of students in the programme is according to teachers and students heterogeneous in terms of knowledge of research methods and communication theory. It is therefore concluded that the minimum requirements set for the programme are not sufficient. ET believes the administration should consider a “preparatory” or “conversion program” for students from other faculties in order to raise their entrance level.

5.1.2. Efficiency of enhancing the motivation of applicants and new students

Information on the study programme is disseminated by the Committee of the Study Programme (it is in charge of the content of information materials), while the Administration of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University is responsible for information on the International communication programme. Recently, the Faculty of Communication has been taking an active part in various events, which were designated for the presentation of the study programme (open-day events, education fairs). Last year, information posters, which were distributed in all Lithuanian universities, started to be used for disseminating information on the study programme. In future, it is planned to supplement the list of information dissemination measures by public lectures on the topic of international communication. This measure is expected to expand awareness of and to promote interest in this study programme.

The ET is positive about the efficiency of these efforts.

The Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences is listed on the top-10 degree programmes in Vilnius University (SAR, p. 12). Potential students access information on the website of the faculty. The majority of students who select the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences are bachelors from the Communication Faculty of Vilnius University.

5.2. Study process

5.2.1. Rationality of the programme schedule

Training and learning at Vilnius University is organized in semesters. The calendar duration of a semester is 20 weeks including 4 weeks for examination sessions. Every semester, students take 4 subjects and write research work, except for semester 4 when they write their Master's thesis. Per week, 16-28 academic hours per week are allocated for contact hours, while self-studies constitute 48% of the total time. The number of contact hours are prescribed by the Regulations for Degree Programmes in Vilnius University as approved on 22 June 2006. (SAR, p. 7). Electives enable students to deepen their knowledge in crisis management, marketing communication, world communication, gender communication and multimedia systems. The students are offered an opportunity to choose between two electives.

The ET concludes from the meetings with the students and the graduates that the programme is flexible. It accommodates the needs and wishes of (working) students to quite a large extent. The students in the site visit meeting were satisfied with this.

5.2.2. Student academic performance

The number of graduates increased from 14 in 2008 to 23 in 2010, whereas the number of students that quit the program (dropouts) decreased from 7 to 1 in the same period. The dropout rate is higher in the second than in the first year. On average, 1-2 students terminate studies after each semester. The main reason for dropout is the inability to combine studies and work, particularly in the last semester when students need to write their final thesis.

The ET agrees with the SAR team that in order to solve this problem, research work seminars could be organized, which could help students to mobilize themselves and complete their thesis.

5.2.3. Mobility of teachers and students

Students in the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences participate in the international student exchange programmes. Annually 1-2 students go abroad to study through the Erasmus exchange programme. Teachers take part in international conferences. Due to high teaching load and low resources, international teacher mobility is limited to individual examples.

5.3. Student support

5.3.1. Usefulness of academic support

Students enrolled in the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences receive information on studies and consult teachers on the issues related to writing of term papers and final theses during the whole period of studies. The content of the curriculum, lists of electives, timetables of lectures, timetables of examination sessions, information on conferences, etc. are published on the website of the Faculty www.kf.vu.lt. In addition, students are allowed to consult teachers individually at office hours of the teacher.

"The Learning Instructions for Written Works" should help students to familiarize themselves with the requirements for written work. The ET evaluates performance on this aspect as good.

5.3.2. Efficiency of social support

Social support for students is organized at the level of the University. The university provides dormitories, and scholarships. The students said in the interviews that they are satisfied with the social support offered by the university.

The ET concludes from the SAR and the site visit meetings with the students and graduates that the social support is good.

5.4. Student achievement assessment

5.4.1. Suitability of assessment criteria and their publicity

Student achievements in all subjects of the degree programme are assessed in written or oral examinations. Cumulative assessment is also employed. Students' knowledge is evaluated on the basis of the Results Evaluation Procedure of Vilnius University. The teachers are guided by the effective Studies Provisions of Vilnius University, which obligate the teacher of a subject to introduce to the students the programme of the subject, the work order during the semester, and the reporting requirements. Examinations in writing may be multiple choice tests or essay questions on theory subjects, and written analyses of cases or problems. In addition some examinations are taken orally. During some examinations, students are allowed to use auxiliary material and documents. Dishonesty and copying are not problematic issues within this degree programme. Every teacher selects an evaluation system, which is introduced to the students at the introduction of the subject. In course evaluation questionnaires, students indicate that they find assessment procedures fair. Students who want to dispute their assessments may appeal to the Commission of Appellation of the Communication Faculty.

The ET finds that the assessment criteria are sufficiently suitable to the programme as it is delivered and that they are clearly published and made known to the students

5.4.2. Feedback efficiency

According to the Study Process Regulation of Vilnius University, students are entitled to look into their assessments and teachers have to comment on the results of assessments. Students enrolled in the Master's Degree Programme in Communication Sciences receive information on studies and consult teachers on the issues related to writing of term papers and final theses during the whole period of studies. The ET is positive about this aspect.

5.4.3. Efficiency of final thesis assessment

The supervisor of the thesis and one reviewer assess the final thesis. Both write a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis. A student is entitled to see the review one day before the defense in an open meeting of the Commission. When evaluating the final thesis the following criteria are taken into consideration: originality and relevance of research, theoretical level and practical benefit; selection, analysis and interpretation of scientific literature; analysis of the research object; organization and structure of the text; description of scientific research; interpretation of research data; formulation of conclusions. Master's final thesis is defended at the open meeting of the Defense Commission. From 2007, Master's final theses are stored in the digital database of Vilnius University to provide access to the research, and to control possible plagiarism cases. Guidelines for written assignments are available on Internet (www.kf.vu.lt). The ET is satisfied with the performance on this aspect.

5.4.4. Functionality of the system for assessment and recognition of achievements acquired in non-formal and self-education

The SAR does not contain information on this topic. Students did not have complaints on this issue. ET concludes that this section is adequate.

5.5. Graduates placement

5.5.1. Expediency of graduate placement

According to the SAR, there is a need in the market (since 1998) for professionals and further studies, whereas the majority of graduates work according to specialization (SAR, p.4).

In the interview with the ET-team, both statements were confirmed, based on personal communication with graduates and employers.

The ET concludes from the SAR and the site visit meetings with graduates and employers that graduate placement are sufficient.

6. Programme management

6.1. Programme administration

6.1.1. Efficiency of the programme management activities

At the faculty the quality of study programmes is ensured by the committee of the particular study programme, the academic branch department of the Communication Faculty tutoring the programme, the Study Commission of the Faculty Council, the Deputy Dean for Studies of the faculty, and the council of the faculty. All of them also take care of material conditions and ensure the process of studies.

The committee of each study programme and the academic branch department of the Communication Faculty tutoring the programme are responsible for programme updates. Changes in the programmes are discussed and approved at the department, considered and the Study Commission of the faculty, approved by the Council. Inner assessment of the study quality is performed with consideration of the opinion of teachers-specialists of the field, the opinion of students, and by talking to employers.

6.2. Internal quality assurance

6.2.1. Suitability of the programme quality evaluation

The quality of the study programme at the faculty is the responsibility of the committee of the particular study programme, the academic branch division of the Faculty of Communication supervising the programme, the Studies Committee of the Council of the Faculty, the Vice-Dean on Study Affairs of the Faculty, and the Council of the Faculty, who also take care of material conditions and ensure the study process. Amendments to the programme are considered and approved in the Department, considered by the Studies Commission of the Faculty, and approved by the Council. Internal quality evaluation of studies is performed with due consideration of the opinion of the teachers who are experts in the area, opinion of students, and discussions with employer.

In 2008, the Quality Management Centre was established at Vilnius University. Its main activity is development of quality assessment criteria and indexes, gathering and processing of information on studies quality, quality management, and control of quality implementation at Vilnius University. Currently the studies quality at VU is realized by discussing the study programmes at VU Studies Department, by considering and approving study programmes, self-assessment results at the VU Studies Commission and the Senate.

Students are also involved in the evaluation process of the study programme. The teacher of each subject gives anonymous questionnaires, in which students evaluate the subject's quality, teaching methods, etc. At the end of each semester, the Administration of the Faculty of Communication also organizes students' opinion surveys. The results obtained are discussed at sittings of the Information and Communication Department and the committee of the programme takes them into consideration when evaluating and reviewing the programme.

It is planned to prepare feedback questionnaires for alumni and relevant questionnaires for employers, which will be aimed at determining the quality of the study programme and organization of studies, and it will be sought to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the study programmes and to find ways to eliminate the latter.

In the interviews during the site visit students mentioned that they were not always motivated to fill in the evaluation questionnaires seriously.

6.2.2. Efficiency of the programme quality improvement

Analyzing the provided study programmes, graduates are surveyed or informal meetings with graduates are held, during which study programmes, organization of the studies, quality of the studies are analyzed trying to reveal their limitations and to find ways to eliminate them. Graduate surveys have shown that graduates can easily find a job in Lithuanian and foreign organizations. Graduates work in information technologies, marketing, advertising, public relations, media, and state institutions. Analyzing the opinions on knowledge and skills provided by the programme it is clear that Communication Sciences Master study programme provide essential theoretical knowledge and practical skills that allow the graduates to be competitive in the job market (SAR, p. 19).

6.2.3. Efficiency of stakeholder participation

Programme self-evaluation is an on-going process. It involves teaching staff and students, but also graduates, and employers (SAR, p. 19). In surveys employers indicate that the knowledge obtained by the graduates can be fully or partially applied in practice (SAR, p.19). Graduates are willing to give public lectures, and to share their experience. Graduates often are active supporters of event organization or ensuring of the study process (lecture reading, formulation of topics of scientific researches, organization of practical trainings). However, according to the SAR (p.19), relations with graduates are insufficient; their contribution to improvement of the study programme is minimal. During the interviews, employers and graduates expressed their willingness to be involved in the programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Experts team recommends that the programme create a Board of Visitors to serve as external advisors to the programme. The board would be made up of professionals in the field who would, on perhaps an annual basis, come to the campus and offer advice on curricular and other academic matters, helping the programme to better relations with an important source of information about changing needs in the professional environment in which program alumni will seek employment. Further, such a board would be a ready supply of one-off guest lecturers for classroom instruction. Such lectures are almost always very attractive to students and provide an important link to the professional communications world outside the campus. Several of the employers the team spoke to expressed willingness – eagerness, even – to join such a board. Employers the team interviewed also expressed a willingness to provide internships to students in the program.

3.2 The Experts team recommends that the department examine closely the program offerings of the M.A. in International Communications and the M.A. in Communication Science to see where a partial merger could be effected. This would provide pedagogical advantages in that it would provide theoretical grounding to an essentially practice-based professional course, and would, similarly, provide an understanding of real-world applications for a theoretical course which, however much it is designed to lead to doctoral work, has as its core how mediated communication allows, and occasionally impedes, human interaction in a wide variety of contexts.

3.3 The ET suggest to make an explicit choice for either a program content that builds on a bachelor in communication science, or a program content that does not require this prior knowledge. If the Faculty decides for the first option, it recommends offering a preparatory (conversion) programme for students who do not possess this prior knowledge before entering the master's programme.

3.4 The main reason for dropout is the inability to combine studies and work, particularly in the last semester when students need to write their final theses. The ET agrees with the SAR-team that in order to solve this problem, research work seminars could be organized, which could help students to mobilize themselves and complete their thesis.

3.5 The team believes that serious attention needs to be paid to staff development. Some classroom instructors volunteered in interviews that the current procedure, which allows for teaching staff to take a course in staff development, is no longer free, as it once was, which a serious impediment is when teacher pay scales are already perilously low. There are resources free available online for university teaching staff development. The team believes that the university can improve the quality of classroom instruction by putting some attention – money would help, but is not utterly necessary – into this area. A first step may be to organize yearly talks with individual teachers to see how their wishes for development may be honored.

3.6 The evaluation team recommend that that school's administration ensure that workloads for teaching staff be equitable and appear to be equitable. Particularly in an environment in which salaries for teaching staff are extremely low, it is vitally important for morale that teaching staff believe that the work and the rewards are shared equitably.

3.7 The ET suggests exploring the desirability of reducing the teaching load through reducing the number of contact hours. The present number of contact hours is high as compared to programmes in Communication Science in other countries.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Communication Sciences* (state code – 62409S103 (new code - 621P90002)) 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 (poor) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

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

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

Grupēs vadovas:
Team Leader:

Prof. Steven Knowlton

Grupēs nariai:
Team members:

Dr. Baiba Holma
Prof. Peter Neijens
Prof. Hans Beentjes
Dainius Radzevičius