



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Utenos kolegijos

***ODONTOLOGINĖS PRIEŽIŪROS STUDIJŲ  
PROGRAMOS (65308B102, 653A52002)***

**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT  
OF *ODONTOLOGICAL CARE (65308B102, 653A52002)*  
STUDY PROGRAMME  
at Utena College**

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Dr. Michael Emery

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Dr. Jonas Bartlingas  
Dr. Odont. Erminija Guzaitienė  
Mr. Tadas Juknius  
Assoc. Prof. Egita Senakola

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Odontologinė priežiūra</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	65308B102, 653A52002
Studijų sritis	biomedicinos mokslai
Studijų kryptis	burnos priežiūra
Studijų programos rūšis	koleginės studijos
Studijų pakopa	pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (3)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	180
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	gydytojo odontologo padėjėjas, odontologijos profesinis bakalauras, odontologinės priežiūros profesinis bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2001-08-31

## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Odontological Care</i>
State code	65308B102, 653A52002
Study area	Biomedical Sciences
Study field	Oral Care
Kind of the study programme	College Studies
Study Cycle	first
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (3)
Volume of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor of Odontological Care, Dental Assistant, Professional Bachelor of Dentistry
Date of registration of the study programme	2001-08-31

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Utena College (UC) is a state institution of higher education in the region of East Aukštaitija (Highlands), established in 2000. In 2006 the College students started to be awarded a professional bachelor's qualification degree. The organizational structure of the College consists of two faculties: the Faculty of Business and Technologies and the Faculty of Health Care and Social Care. The departments within the Faculty of Health Care and Social Care are organized according to the areas of studies where appropriate study programmes are realized: the Department of Odontological Care – Odontological Care, Dental Hygiene and Dental Technologies study programmes; the Department of Health Care and Rehabilitation – General Practice Nursing, Physical Therapy and Cosmetology study programmes; the Department of Social Welfare realizes Social Work and Social Pedagogic study programmes.

This programme in Odontological care (OC) is a first cycle programme for the Bachelor Degree in Odontological Care and the professional dental assistant's qualification. It is full-time over three years and for 180 ECTS. As such, it is in line with the Bologna Declaration. The programme was evaluated by an external team of international experts under Dr Michael Emery (UK) as chair/team leader and members Dr. Odont. Ermimija Guzaitiene (Lithuania), Assoc. Prof. Egita Senakola (Latvia), Dr. Jonas Bartlingas (Lithuania) and Mr. Tadas Juknius (Lithuania)

The following evaluation report is based on the structured self-evaluation report (SER) and other documents provided by UC and on the team's experiences together with the observations gathered during the site visit on 19 September, 2012. Some consideration might be given to re-naming this programme as one for 'dental assistant' or 'dental therapist', as in some other European countries. 'Odontological care' is not widely used elsewhere today. This is mooted in the SER also.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### *1. Programme aims and learning outcomes*

The demand for dental assistants from the OC programme is determined by the increase in volume of dental care services. According to the analysis of the situation Lithuania at the site visit, and there is only half of a dental assistant for one dentist (ratio 0.5:1). At the meeting of the expert team with social partners it was stated that demand for dental assistants persists and

graduates of UC are successfully employed in Utena region, but also in Vilnius, as also in the region of East Aukštaitija where it is only UC which educate these specialists. The OC study programme clearly defines the aims and learning outcomes, which reflect the profile of the programme and are related to the activities of dental assistants.

The study programme is continually monitored, corrected and assessed. It is the expert team's view that it ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes. The study programme as well as the subjects are constantly upgraded, which ensures students' ability to work actively and in accordance with updated following the Standard of Professional Education of Dental assistant. The study programme (learning outcomes, aims of the programme, content of subjects) should be assessed according to the needs of employers and would bring the study programme nearer to the specific needs of the labour market providing students with essential knowledge and necessary practical skills. Currently, many of the learning outcomes are somewhat general and could be applied to a range of other programme, thus more specificity is required in these instances. The aims and intended learning outcomes of the OC study programme are widely announced on the College website as well as in an information publication of the College and local media.

## ***2. Curriculum design***

As noted, the OC study programme consists of 180 credits (4800 hours). The full-time form of studies is three years; the annual volume is 60 credits and corresponds to the requirements and regulation of higher education in Lithuania. The programme of the college studies consists of: general subjects- 15 credits, (8.3% of the amount of the programme), subjects of study area - 90 credits (50% of the amount of the programme), optional subjects set by the College and chosen by students' 21 credits, elective - 9 credits. Professional activity practices are given 36 credits, including 33 credits to professional activity practices. This makes up 18.3 % of the total amount of the OC study programme. The final paper and qualification examination are given 9 credits (5% of the total amount of the study programme). At the site visit, the employers suggested that introducing modern assisting methods into the curriculum as an example of their possible input into curricular developments if there are consulted.

The distribution of the study subjects load during the three years of the entire duration of the programme is even. There are not more than seven subjects in a semester and the number of hours per week are no more than 26 hours of contact time. At the end of each semester students take the exams or the subjects studied are completed by the student's project. Professional activity practices are carried out in four stages. In the second semester there is work with odontological

equipment and materials (6 ECTS), in the fourth semester – the practice odontological work methods (6 ECTS), and nursing practice (3 ECTS) in the sixth semester, and the final practice and supervision (21 ECTS).

Updated subjects are based on the work with modern technologies. The obtained equipment and acquired skills enable the dental student to qualitatively assist during diagnosing and treatment procedures. To reflect common European tendencies themes of Oral Health and General Health Promotion should be introduced as Prevention of Oral Diseases and Traumas in different age groups. The subjects like Personal Health Education, Individual and Professional Oral Hygiene, Prophylaxis of Oral and Dental Diseases, and Geriatric Patients Oral Care are optional, but are more related with the profession than the Basics of Management and Economy of Health. However, the employers proposed a more current and flexible programme to meet the specific needs of modern (state-of-art) dentistry including taking care of patients after oral and perio-surgery (implants placement). Such structure of the programme does not fully ensure the achievement of the general learning outcomes. These recommendations should be heard and followed so as to bring this programme to 21th century.

The positive side of this programme is to introduce more methods of modern assisting into the OC study programme's curriculum: "four-hand" work, "six-hand" work, that gives more attention to team work and possibilities to apply various assisting models and also various interactive teaching methods. This aspect was noted by the employers and also supported by the expert team. The OC study programme and the content of its subjects basically correspond to the Requirements and Regulations. Descriptions of subjects' topics are presented in a logical sequence, following the principles of Bloom's taxonomy: from knowing to understanding, from application to analysis, and synthesis and assessment.

### ***3. Staff***

The qualification of all lecturers working in the programme is sufficient for the realization of the aims and results of the programme. In the OC study programme work there are 21 permanent lecturers, which makes up of 70 per cent of all lecturers working in the programme and nine lecturers work part-time who have a great experience of practical work. All lecturers have more than three years of work experience. In total, 30 lecturers work in the programme and there are 43 students. Overall, there are 3.5 full-time specific posts for lecturers in the programme. In 2011-2012 academic year in the OC programme there worked four scientists, one of them in a secondary post. Thus it can be stated that the distribution of the pedagogical workload of lecturers

with a scientific degree in the study programme is optimal and sufficient. The average age of lecturers is 48.

Twelve lecturers working in the programme have medical/odontological education and experience of practical work. 18 lecturers working in the programme have pedagogical qualification and they are experienced. Work experience of lecturers who teach general subjects is sufficient because all lecturers have more than five years' experience of pedagogical work and the experience is also demonstrated by their prepared and published textbooks, methodical materials, etc. During a project a textbook for preparation of dental assistants was also published: *'Activities of a Dental Assistant: Theory and Practice'* together with lecturers from Vilnius University Institute of Dentistry and other colleges. Lecturers of the programme take an active part in expert educational activities organized locally and in some international conferences-seminars, but this is minimal overall.

Though, the analysis of lecturers' CVs shows that quite a lot of lecturers assess their level of knowledge of foreign languages as advanced or experienced users. But only a few lecturers interviewed with the expert team spoke in effective English, others talked with the help of the interpreter, therefore, skills in the foreign languages (particularly English, the dominant EU international language) should be much improved. It will help in the future to participate in different staff international exchange programmes and also international research activities to help support teaching and keep the programme current in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mobility may be restricted by programmes abroad being different in scope. But the expert team strongly recommends much more positive effort is made to exchange. During meeting with students it was stated that competence of staff, especially of studies field, satisfies students and graduates and relations are good.

#### ***4. Facilities and learning resources***

It can be stated that the number of classrooms, laboratories and other premises for realization of the study programme for theoretical subjects is sufficient. Practical classes take place in the base, which is well equipped. Obtaining new equipment through implementation of projects constantly renews the material base. There are three sets of odontological equipment and three phantom heads. Two students usually work (rotate) with one equipment and reception, the X-ray room and also the room for sterilization. The clinic creates conditions to learn odontological care procedures and to work as dental team members.

During the whole time of the studies 36 ECTS credits are for practices which students perform at the clinic of odontological care specialists' training centre of UC and in primary health care centers (PHCC). The main base of practices for dental assistants is the VŠĮ (Public institution) Žalgiris clinic of Vilnius University Hospital and the VŠĮ Utenos PHCC. One practice supervisor works with 2 to 4 students. The possibility to perform professional activity practices at the university hospital ensures a high level of training. Students and graduates suggested to the expert team that more practice would be beneficial for training. They also stated that 'practice' is their favourite subject area.

The library of UC consists of general reading room with 36 working places and 20 workplaces with an access to Internet and also databases of EBSCO, Academic Search Premier, MEDLINE, Health SOURCE, etc. Students are fully provided with methodological materials necessary for studies.

### ***5. Study process and student assessment***

An admission of students is organized in accordance with the regulations and also with the general procedures for joint admission. There are no special requirements in admitting students to the programme. The admission requirements to the study programme are clearly defined. Out of 26 admitted first year students to the OC study programme 23 received state funding in the year 2011. But the competition to this study programme is decreasing: 2,3 in the year 2011 yet 4,5 was in 2009. There is a possibility to study according to individual study programme for those who have already completed studies in this study area or precede studies after transferring from other higher schools.

Students are provided with all necessary information regarding studies and examinations. Students' classroom working day lasts six hours on average, which ensures efficiency of students' independent work. At the meeting with graduates they stated to the expert team that they would recommend choosing this OC programme to other people. Studies of every subject (module) are completed with an exam or an assessment of student's independent work (project). Learning outcomes of studies are analysed and discussed, students' achievements are evaluated, problems of poor progress are discussed and ways of solution to problems are planned. The academic group consists of some 14 students on average.

The dropout during the period under assessment is 9.8%, about average for Lithuania. Students left the study programme on personal request – 4.9%; because of under-achievement – 1.6%; not



returned after academic holiday – 0.5%; transferred to another programme (e.g., DH, etc.) – 2.8%. It seems that it was insufficient motivation for these students to continuing to study on the OC programme. Students' international mobility is low because of the different systems of educating and training of OC in Europe and inadequate funding is also identified as a serious restriction to students' mobility. More encouragement is needed here; however, Project Datopa should increase programme internationality.

Every year the staff of the College presents this OC programme to school students in the Open Day events, at higher education fairs, and the publications of 'Where to Study' and also the Internet portal. Students are encouraged to take part in the activities of the scientific society of students of UC, the Dental Care Society, which joins students who are doing scientific public work and seeking to deepen their knowledge and practical skills.

The timetable, intensity of the study subjects, the distribution of study workload in a week is designed properly and according national Regulations and the General Requirements for the College Studies of Lithuania. On a student's request an individual study programme or part of it (for a semester, two semesters, etc.) can be made for them. Students are consistently provided with social support. Advanced students are awarded incentive grants. Social scholarships can be granted to students who correspond to criteria set by the Government. The need for hostel accommodation is satisfied 100%. In the hostels there is wireless Internet, which facilitates the students' independent work and access to learning materials.

Studies achievements in all study subjects are assessed on the principle of cumulative score. Information about the assessment criteria of achievements is acceptable for students, clear, flexible and easily accessible on the College's website. The assessment of the qualification exam consists of demonstration of practical skills in the clinical training base by solving a practical situation. Students' employment after completion of the OC study programme is: in 2010, 65% of students worked according to their specialty; 10% - not according to their specialty; 5% continued studies at Lithuanian universities; there are no data for about 15% of students; 5% went abroad. In 2011, 90 % of students worked according to their specialty, an excellent figure; 10% did not work because they did not look for a job.

## ***6. Programme management***

The OC study programme is, as noted, assigned to the Department of Odontological Care, which administers the study programme and ensures the quality of studies. The processes of administration of the Study Programme Committee and quality assurance are regulated by the Regulations of the Department and decisions made at departmental meetings. The decisions are discussed in the meetings of the Deanery and formalized by the Dean's order.

There is a system of internal assurance of quality of the studies worked out at UC – Internal quality management system 2011-2013 (Funded by the ESF). The management of the programme, decision-making and responsibility for the implementation, supervision and improvement of the programme are assigned to several management levels: department, faculty and administration of the College. For assurance of quality for implementation of the programme the procedures are set in the Quality Guide of the College and are applied. These comprise monitoring the study programme, data collection, means of analyses and procedures such as surveys and analyses of students, graduates, and employers and are carried out regularly. All the results are analysed in the meetings of the Department and Directorate. Systematized and generalized information covering all management and quality aspects of the studies once a year are presented in the Annual Account of the College and submitted for consideration in the Academic Board of the College.

It would be best if social partners of various levels be even more involved beyond the current contributions in the quality process and on-going programme improvements. These could include: graduates (some members of Alumni club), representatives from the Lithuanian Dental Chamber, and also representatives from the district municipalities. The Department of Odontological Care together with the Board of the Faculty of Health Care and Social Care, administration, student representatives and employers carry out some self-assessment studies but this needs enhancement to help update all aspects of the intended learning outcomes for the students. The results are presented and discussed at the Faculty and at the local public health community meetings, but again this needs enhancement. There is analysis of the study programme, as the College wants to have it at an international level, but there is a way to go yet. The expert team recommends the benchmarking of this programme against the best international examples to successfully internationalize this OC programme. This would also make it a more distinctive programme otherwise consideration should be given to combining it with the similar

dental hygiene study programme to produce one main dental programme with specific branches off.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

**3.1** The learning outcomes, the aims of this OC programme, and subject content should also be assessed by the social partners/employers according to current market needs and specific requirements of dental assistants. Some additional specific learning outcomes are therefore required.

**3.2** Some significant optional subjects should be changed to mandatory ones, as they are more related with the dental assistant profession. Benchmarking the curriculum against the best examples internationally would help in this matter.

**3.3** A more modern up-to-date curricular structure is suggested by the employers to reflect more current specific competences required in today's workplace. This includes introducing more modern assisting methods into the curriculum for dental assistants, as noted by the expert team during the site visit. Such assistance from employers helps ensure the programme's curricular relevance and on-going development.

**3.4** There is limited proficiency in staff abilities in English, as evidenced at site visit meetings. It is relatively poor and needs to be much improved and with greater confidence to internationalize this programme more effectively. This would also assist research activities into more international topics as a multitude of relevant books and journals are published in English.

**3.5** International mobility of teaching staff with the wider use of Erasmus finance needs to be greatly increased. Joint international research activities could ensue.

**3.6** The expert team recommends more clearly defined differences between the OC programme and the dental hygiene programme or to combine them together as one main dental programme with distinctive branches off. Currently, the two programmes are very similar, though they lead to two separate careers as dental assistant or dental hygienist. If this OC programme is to remain independent and at the same time be more distinctive then it would be wise to benchmark it against the best OC programmes elsewhere.

## IV. SUMMARY

### ***1. Programme aims and learning outcomes***

The OC study programme clearly defines the aims, learning outcomes, which reflect the profile of the programme and are related with the activities of dental assistants. The study programme is continually monitored, corrected and assessed. It ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes. The study programme (learning outcomes, aims of the programme, content of subjects) should be assessed according to the specific needs of employers and this would bring the study programme nearer to the specific needs of the labour market providing students with necessary knowledge and practical skills. Thus, some more specific learning outcomes should be included in this programme. The aims and intended learning outcomes of the OC study programme are widely announced on the College website as well as in an information publication of the College and local media.

### ***2. Curriculum design***

The programme meets the requirements set by the National regulating documents and also the scope of programme is sufficient to ensure the set learning outcomes. This programme should be benchmarked against the best international standards. To reflect common European tendencies some significant optional subjects (indicated in the main text) should be changed to mandatory ones, as they are more related with profession and more focused to prevention. The positive side, recommended by employers during the site visit and also by the expert team to modernize and make even more relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is introducing more methods of modern assisting into the OC study programme that gives more attention to team work and possibilities to apply various assisting models and also various interactive teaching methods.

### ***3. Staff***

The qualification of all lecturers working in the programme is sufficient for the realization of the aims and results of the programme. The lecturers of the programme are well educated and have enough competences to ensure a successful implementation of this OC study programme. Teachers' skills in the foreign languages (particularly English, the dominant EU international language) should be greatly improved. It will help in the future for teaching staff to participate in different international exchange programmes; this would also influence researches into international topics and help to keep the programme current 21<sup>st</sup> century. Overall, staff research activities need further development and a research culture produced in the dental area.

The dynamics of lecturers' mobility is restricted by the different content and scope of the OC programmes in Europe.

#### ***4. Facilities and learning recourses***

The number of classrooms, laboratories and other premises for realization of the OC study programme for theoretical subjects is sufficient. Odontological practical classes take place in the base, which is well equipped and creates conditions to learn oral care procedures and to work as dental team members. Obtaining new equipment through implementation of projects constantly renews the material base. Students are fully provided with methodological materials necessary for studies. The facilities of library are adequate to obtain knowledge and also there is a wide provision of databases for use by students. A range of practices is provided for the dental assistants and this is confirmed by the expert team; students and graduates suggested that having more practices would be even more beneficial in this OC programme. The dental assistants informed the expert team that 'Practice' is their favourite subject area on this OC programme.

#### ***5. Study process and students performance assessment***

The admission of students is in accordance with the National regulations and also are clearly defined. Students are provided with all necessary information regarding studies, examinations and the assessment criteria of achievements and information is acceptable for students; it is clear, flexible and easily accessible on the College's website. Students' international mobility is low because of the different systems of educating and training of odontological care in Europe and elsewhere, though more encouragement is suggested by the expert team. Project Datopa should help student mobility in future. The timetable, intensity of the study subjects and the distribution of study workload in a week is designed properly and according to National Regulations and the General Requirements for the College Studies of Lithuania. On a student's request an individual study programme or part of it can be made for them. The need for hostel accommodation is fully satisfied. Students' employment after completion of the OC study programme is high.

#### ***6. Programme management***

There is a system of internal assurance of quality of the studies worked out at UC – Internal quality management system 2011-2013 (Funded by the ESF). The management of the programme, decision-making and responsibility for the implementation, supervision and improvement of the programme are assigned to several management levels: department, faculty and administration of the College. In order to comprehensively and efficiently assess and improve the quality of implementation of this study programme social partners of various levels, as noted

previously, should be more involved into this process. The benchmarking of this programme against the best international examples to successfully internationalize and upgrade this OC programme is recommended by the expert team if this programme is to remain independent and be more distinctive. Otherwise, consideration should be given to combining it with the dental hygiene study programme to produce one main dental programme with distinctive branches off.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Odontological Care* (state codes – 65308B102, 653A52002) at Utena College is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

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

\*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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