



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Lietuvos sveikatos mokslų universiteto
ODONTOLOGIJOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
(60108B101, 601A40002)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *DENTISTRY* (60108B101, 601A40002)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Odontologija</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	60108B101, 601A40002
Studijų sritis	biomedicinos mokslai
Studijų kryptis	odontologija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	pirmoji ir antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	300
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	odontologijos magistras, gydytojas odontologas
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Dentistry</i>
State code	60108B101, 601A40002
Study area	Biomedical Sciences
Study field	Dentistry
Kind of the study programme	University Studies
Study Cycle	first and second
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	300
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Dentistry, Doctor Odontologist
Date of registration of the study programme	1997-05-19

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LUHS) is the largest institution of health specialists' education and training in Lithuania. It is a public legal entity operating as a public institution with long history. The Faculty of Dentistry was established in 1968 and has been a part of Kaunas Medical Institute until it was reorganized into Kaunas Medical Academy in 1989 which was renamed Kaunas University of Medicine later. The LUHS is a merger of the Kaunas University of Medicine and Lithuanian Veterinary Academy in 2010.

The following report is based on the structured Self-Evaluation Report (SER) provided to the expert team panel well in advance by the LUHS for individual review and on the members' experiences and observations gathered during the site visit on 4 October, 2012. The guidelines for the review have been the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) in Lithuania template for report. All of the expert team's comments and recommendations are offered with the intention of ensuring that the programme achieves the highest level of quality consistent with its high aspirations and facilitates the Committee of the Study Programmes in its work for passing the accreditation resolution. The expert team feels that the provided documentations were sufficient and as thorough as could be expected. Overall, more emphasis might have been placed on the internationalisation of this programme.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

Programme aims and learning outcomes

The objectives of the Faculty of Dentistry are well defined in the SER. However, the mission is not formally expressed as a mission statement, but rather in different tasks placed on the faculty and its graduates. A mission statement should be described with greater clarity placing the appropriate focus on research as a fundamental element for all activities with the Faculty. Also the focus on patient care should be included in the mission statement so that the triad of education, research and patient care provides a solid framework for dental education.

There have been several attempts to define the demand for the programme based on the existing data. In the SER it is stated that the demand for the specialists has dropped due to economic recession and the services of the specialists are not evenly distributed in the country. Those professionals leaving the country also compromise the working force in the country. However, the expert team considers the number of the dentists trained is more than sufficient for national needs providing the potential of oral health promotion. The allocation of duties among the oral health professionals is fully utilized. The high number of the students at approaching 800

in the programme, which has increased recently, places challenges for the implementation of the programme and should be re-evaluated.

The programme meets the structural requirements as indicated in the European Commission directive of 2005 (EC directive 2005/36). Introduction of ECTS credits, an European compatible credit system as recommended in the Bologna Declaration, allows students to experience education at schools in other European countries. The competences for the graduating dentists follow exactly the recommendation by the Association of Dental Education in Europe (ADEE) document of 2009 (Cowpe J et al. Eur J Dent Educ 14: 193-202, 2010). The ADEE, however, anticipates the competence statements could support the educational institutions in defining the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes should support defined competences but are at a greater level of detail and form the basis of learning and programme assessment. Thus, the content of learning outcomes presented in the SER should be reconsidered in relation to competences required.

The Faculty is also running the Dental Hygiene (DH) and, in addition, the Programme of Dentistry in English. It remained unclear in the SER how the Study Programme of Dentistry in English relates to the one in Lithuanian, although in discussions with self-evaluation team and foreign students it was stated to be the same as the one in Lithuanian. The learning outcomes for the Dentistry and DH study programmes are very similar and should be reviewed.

The programme would benefit with more clarity on the assessment of achievement of learning outcomes. The Faculty could consider the introduction of Observational Structural Competence Evaluation (OSCE) which is widely used in European Dental Schools to ensure transparent and standardized assessment of the students' competences.

Curriculum design

The study programme is designed in accordance with the laws and directives applicable in Lithuania and European Union (EU) and it formally meets these requirements. The curriculum consists of the general university education subjects, speciality subjects, electives, out-reach clinical training, and research work. However, the structure of the curriculum is very traditional and would benefit of vertical and horizontal integration. The basic science subjects are taught separately with little connection to speciality subjects. The actual study load of the first two years is excessive; this is agreed by the present and graduate students, in comparison to later years. There is a large amount of course content of low relevance to dental students like Cytology and parasitology, Human histology and embryology and strong emphasis mainly on general medical courses. This should be reviewed. The curriculum covers all dental disciplines

necessary for future qualified professionals. It is noteworthy that also prevention of oral diseases is separately covered in the early phase of training.

There is a strong reliance on traditional teaching methods hampering the use of active learning methods. The very high number of the students and limited facilities for small group teaching and seminars favours this traditional approach in teaching; this present situation may undermine effective learning processes of the students. In addition, the limited number of clinical units available for clinical training places demands on curriculum design and scheduling the clinical sessions effectively.

To enhance effective learning not only general subjects but the whole curriculum could be organized in modules which are defined by the Association for Dental Education in Europe as learning units, independent from discipline or departmental structure. The expert team was informed of the practice of the teachers to include learning outcomes, learning materials, contact hours (e.g., lectures, seminars, working groups) and assessment procedures which is to be acknowledged. However, most of this is done within the individual dental disciplines and great opportunity for integrated learning contents seems to remain underutilized. Basic courses like Dental Anatomy, Dental Terminology, Basic Oral Biology, Prevention and Public Health, and others could be arranged simultaneously to Dentistry and DH students in modules. The modular organization of learning content also helps to avoid overlapping and unnecessary repetition of teaching often prevalent where a discipline-based approach is applied.

The programme plan for university odontology studies includes scientific research during the study process and a final research work for defense (14 ECTS) which is acknowledged by the expert team. Elective subjects make 7% of specialty subjects giving students an opportunity to individually improve their knowledge and experiences in particular areas. This approach is highly appreciated by the expert team.

Staff

There is a multitude of teachers involved in the programme, which places great challenges for coordination of the teaching content. Clinical teaching is supported by the part-time teachers. These are anticipated to be an essential teaching resource also in the future. Should this vision be realized the justified incentives and status to remain the interest of the existing staff let alone to recruit new individuals to contribute this programme should be guaranteed.

The present staff is found enthusiastic, devoted and highly appreciated by their students. The teaching staff is prepared for the pedagogic responsibilities based on their compulsory training and development of modern course material. They are well-qualified to ensure learning outcomes. However, English skills of some teachers while working with foreign students should

be improved. The staff is quite well balanced in age and the changes in the academic staff have been minor supporting the continuity of the programme without any major negative impact on it. However, overcoming the difficulties accounted in many other European countries in recruiting new staff members should be addressed appropriately in the future. Dental staff at the university is expected to perform three major roles: research, teaching and clinical service, which places a very hard workload on the dental academicians. The personal (internal) promotion of the present dental academicians should also be addressed in order to retain the qualified professionals in the institution. This notion is highly regarded by the expert team.

The teacher-student ratio of 1 to 10 is quite high leaving a quite hard workload, especially for those involved in clinical training. This situation is reflected in relatively low research output of the staff, thus more time for research should be guaranteed in working schedules. The teachers have opportunities for professional improvement. There has been little international exchange activity among the staff members. The expert team encourages the teachers to continue and expand these activities to further facilitate the recommendations of Bologna Declaration.

Facilities and learning resources

The clinical training is executed in several different locations within the hospital campus area. The present situation challenges natural interaction and communication among teaching staff. The staff members have the vision of the new facility providing better environment for training high quality dentists in Kaunas. The expert team very strongly supports the quick realisation of this vision. The dental units necessary for clinical training are functional for this purpose. However, the low number of them is considered as an obstacle for sufficient clinical learning opportunities and challenges achievement of learning outcomes.

The students met by the expert team are obliged to buy some essential instruments and materials for their clinical training. The amount of money necessary for the learning, as reported by both the present students and graduates, exceeds 2000 LTL a year. This is considered unacceptable by the expert team. The present situation creates substantial financial burden to all the students of Dentistry and jeopardizes fulfilment of universal requirements for hygiene and product safety.

The new library building at the campus provides an excellent learning environment for the students; it is state-of-the-art and provides a most solid learning environment. The library is very modern with 76 computerized workstations with access to internet and virtual learning materials. It is well equipped with related textbooks and a smaller amount of dental discipline related scientific journals. The opening hours of the library are adequate and better than many in Lithuanian higher education institutions. E-learning is of course widely used by the dental

students but the library is still a most vital learning environment. The University is to be praised for this learning asset with its supportive ambience for studies and cafe.

Study process and student assessment

The study programme of Dentistry seems to have well-motivated and active students with high satisfaction with the programme and the teachers. They enter the programme with good credentials giving a solid basis for their learning and achievement of learning outcomes. In recent years there has been growing interest in the programme of Dentistry. The admission is organized according to the rules for general admission to undergraduate and integrated studies at Lithuanian higher education institutions (LAMA BPO). Requirements of the admission are clearly formulated and accessible on the internet webpage of LUHS (<http://www.lsmuni.lt>). The main admission criterion is a competitive score calculated from secondary school final examinations (Biology, Mathematics or Chemistry, Lithuanian language) or grades (Chemistry or Mathematics) in the disciplines, which are adequate for the studies in Dentistry.

The programme is carried out in several buildings. Timetables look demanding for the students as some subjects are taught throughout the semester while others are implemented in modules. The schedule is flexible and workload per week is distributed expediently from Monday to Friday. The scope of the studies per one semester is 30 ECTS credits. The evaluation of most of the subjects is based on accumulation principle. Not more than five exams are taken at the end of the semester. The wastage of the students has been relatively low during the recent years and this is good. The programme includes requirement for scientific research and a Final Thesis, which has to be presented and defended by students. Otherwise students' integration into the Faculty's scientific community remains low and should be encouraged.

The mobility of students and teachers is administered by the LUHS International Relations and Study Centre. Staff and students' mobility is realised through the Erasmus Exchange Programme, which seems to be the only financial source. The number of students which have been on exchange is relatively low. The lack of skills in foreign languages and confidence in using them seems to be one of the limitations of the mobility. Particular measures (e.g. information in the university newspaper *Ave Vita*) are taken to improve students' mobility and the expert team strongly supports all activities to increase international contacts and experiences. It was a great surprise to the expert team that the interaction both professionally as well as socially between the Lithuanian and English Dentistry programme students was non-existent. The foreign students expressed appreciation of the local cultural environment but the Lithuanian students on the programme tended to underestimate the opportunities to enjoy the international exposure available.

The higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. In the first semester of Dentistry studies the students have The Introduction into the Studies, which aims to familiarize the students with the specifics and aims of the programme and the evaluation system. However, all these activities did not seem to be effective enough to facilitate students' adjustment and, thus, should be improved. Essential information for students is available on LUHS website, both in Lithuanian and English, and is also provided by the LUHS Student Association. The developing Career Centre at LUHS informs students about career prospects. Information about employment possibilities is also obtained during meetings with potential employers. Allocation of stipends and grants is regulated by the documents approved by LUHS Senate.

The assessment principles and criteria are adequate and clearly defined in LUHS study regulations. However, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for practice in social partners' enterprises requires more clarity; there was a certain vagueness in the discussions held with the expert team. All relevant information regarding study issues can be easily found on the webpage of LUHS. Various methods, depending on the didactic aims, are used for assessing the achievements (tests, case analysis, project tasks, discussions, etc.) Requirements of the final papers and assessment criteria are confirmed by the Faculty Council and available at the website. Students are directly informed about their assessment in the internet database. However, the great variation in clinical final examinations to adequately assess the competences needed for high quality professional performance after graduation is of concern of the expert team. Graduates are employed at public health care institutions or private dental clinics. Most promising graduates are invited to doctoral studies. The social partners met by the expert team appreciated the professional quality of the graduates.

Programme management

The Dentistry study programme is managed at department, faculty and college levels. It was stated in the SER that the study programme of Dentistry is managed mainly by the Faculty Council which is responsible to update the OC study programme, assure and improve its quality. The expert team finds this unusual and recommends the more active role of the Study Programme Committee in the programme management. The Dean of the Faculty coordinates Dentistry programme as well as others. To facilitate these activities the expert team recommends allocation of coordination duties by appointing individual coordinators for each programme to insure proper quality management. The expert team finds it justified that students are represented in programme coordination. However, their input could be further utilized for the benefit of development. Information and data about programme's implementation is regularly collected,

analysed and reported each year at the departments by the Dean's Office. As to the quality development it is recommended by the expert team that the Study Programme Committee would take an active role. This arrangement would allow direct and immediate improvement actions.

The quality of the programme and subjects is assessed by surveys carried out both orally and in a written form. External social stakeholders (social partners and employers) stated that they are involved in producing of recommendations on organisation of studies, establishment of students' evaluation criteria, and development of students' competences. Further structuring and clarity is needed; more regular meetings with the stakeholders to share experiences are recommended. The benefits of the graduates in terms of quality development remain minimal. Much more needs to be made of and involved with the alumni. As an internal quality assurance measure it was stated in the SER that the Dean meets with the students not less than once a year seeking feedback on the study quality assurance. This method of collecting feedback should be further developed and more formally standardised.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful consideration the expert team recommends the following:

1. The aims should include direct reference to internationalization of the programme particularly so as there is a parallel programme in English for foreign students.
2. The experts strongly recommend the integration of the early years of this programme with the DH. This includes joint teaching of common subjects. Furthermore, both vertical and horizontal integration throughout the whole programme should be considered. This would produce valuable economies of scale for the Faculty.
3. There is a need to benchmark against the best international standards in order to set this programme in the 21st century.
4. Students and graduates should have more clinical practice. Additionally, there should be more international mobility and exchanges with teaching staff of foreign universities. Much more confidence is needed in the use of English by the teaching staff, particularly those teaching on the English programme. This also applies to the Lithuanian students.
5. Greater variety of patients is needed for student practice, including geriatric patients and those with special care needs. Greater clarity is also required in the management of the practices and the assessments of the students. Actions should be taken to provide all essential instruments and materials free of charge to the students for practice.
6. There has been some student mobility but considering the large number of the students in this programme much more attention should be given for the Lithuanian students to exchange and develop greater confidence and expertise.
7. Students should be encouraged to undertake much more research activity throughout the five years of their programme in addition to the preparation of the Final Thesis. It is noted that a summary page in English is included in the Final Thesis; this use of English should be encouraged and expanded upon.
8. Social partners and employers should be brought together much more regularly to discuss and share their experiences. This will help to guarantee that there is a common approach in provision of a variety of the patients and assessment of the students on practice. Additionally, it is recommended that the alumni association is further developed and positively encouraged for the graduates of this programme. This will be an asset to the university providing current advice about the curriculum, quality matters, working opportunities, and mentoring students.

IV. SUMMARY

The Dentistry study programme at LUHS is executed at the Faculty of Dentistry according to the curriculum designed in accordance with national and international regulations and formally meets these requirements. Although the objectives of the Faculty are well defined in the SER, the mission statement should be described with greater clarity placing appropriate focus on research as a fundamental element of all activities in the faculty. As at the present moment the learning outcomes do not fully support defined competences of Dentistry graduates, the expert team also recommends considering rephrasing them in greater detail in order to form the solid basis for student learning and assessment. Overall, there are approaching 800 Dentistry students. This is a considerable attainment. Additionally, there is a parallel programme in English for foreign students; another attainment. But careful watch should be kept so that recruitment does not go beyond the available resources to support such student numbers.

The recent increase in the number of Dentistry students challenges study programme's implementation and quality assurance. The structure of the curriculum is very traditional and discipline-based, thus it should have more vertical and horizontal integration. In addition, the departmental approach in teaching and limited number of clinical units available for clinical training complicate curriculum design. There is a lack of connection between general and speciality subjects which are introduced later in the curriculum. To enhance effective learning not only general subjects but the whole curriculum could be organized in modules. Moreover, basic courses (e.g., Dental Anatomy) should be arranged simultaneously to Dentistry and DH students to provide the integration of the two programmes in early years. There is a definite need to benchmark against the best international standards.

The present staff is well-qualified to ensure learning outcomes. Teachers were found enthusiastic, devoted and highly appreciated by their students. However, recruitment of new staff members seems to be a challenge, thus better incentives for academic careers has to be developed. The workload of the staff is rather large due to multiple responsibilities and that is reflected in relatively low research output. The opportunities for professional improvement of the teachers are satisfactory; however, English skills of some teachers while working with foreign students should be improved. Furthermore, the mobility of the staff, as well as the students, is low and needs to be greatly encouraged.

The students are well-motivated and active with high satisfaction of the programme and their teachers. The outstanding library at the campus provides an excellent learning environment, however, the students need to spend substantial sum of money to buy instruments and materials necessary for their learning. The clinical training is implemented at various locations of the departments within the campus hampering natural interaction and communication. There should

be more clinical practice with greater variety of patients and that is admitted both by the students and graduates. Students should be encouraged to undertake much more research activity throughout the five years of their programme in addition to the preparation of the Final Thesis. Moreover, bringing together social partners and employers much more regularly to discuss and share their experiences would guarantee a common approach both in provision of a variety of the patients and students' assessment.

Various active measures are taken to ensure proper supervision of programme's implementation. However, management of the programme would benefit from greater allocation of responsibilities among staff. It is recommended that an alumni association is formed for the graduates of this programme. This would be of considerable benefit in providing current advice on the curriculum, quality matters, mentoring students, help with employment, and raising the profile of the programme and Faculty.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Dentistry* (state codes – 60108B101, 601A40002) at Lithuanian University of Health Sciences 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	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	2
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process, student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	17

*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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