



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto

**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *EUROPOS SĄJUNGOS VERSLO
TEISĖ (621M90027)***

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *EUROPEAN UNION BUSINESS LAW (621M90027)*
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius University**

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

Vilnius
2014

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Europos Sąjungos verslo teisė</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621M90027
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Teisė
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (1,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Teisės magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2011-06-22, Nr. 1-01-84

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>European Union Business Law</i>
State code	621M90027
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Law
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1,5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Law
Date of registration of the study programme	22-06-2011, No. 1-01-84

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is a report on the programme in *European Union Business Law (Europos Sąjungos verslo teisė*; state code 621M90027) offered by Vilnius University (hereinafter 'VU'). It is prepared and written in accordance with Article 40 of the Law on Higher Education and Research (No XI-242 of 2009-04-30), the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 2010-12-20, and the Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law, approved by the Order No. V-1385 of the Minister of Education and Science of 2010-08-19. The analysis and evaluation are based, first, upon the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter 'SER'), together with Annexes, prepared by the University preparatory to the evaluation and completed in October 2013, and, second, an on-site visit by the evaluation group appointed by the SKVC (hereinafter 'the panel') to VU on 26 February 2014. The panel consists of six members: the chairman of the group, Dr. Robert Lane (Scotland); team members: Prof. Mar Campins Eritja (Spain), Dr. Raimundas Kalesnykas (Lithuania); employers representative: Ramūnas Kazlauskas (Lithuania); and students representative Birutė Noreikaitė (Lithuania).

The SER was comprehensive and carefully prepared and presented. The panel is aware of the time that went into its preparation and is grateful for the care given it. For the on-site visit meetings were arranged with:

- administrative staff
- staff responsible for preparation of the SER
- a representative sample of teaching staff
- a representative sample of students
- a representative sample of alumni and employers ('social partners').

In addition, the panel was:

- conducted on a tour of VU accommodation (auditoria, other classrooms, libraries and other facilities), and
- afforded the opportunity of reading and assessing students' coursework and final theses.

The Faculty of Law (hereinafter 'the Faculty') at VU is the first and the oldest institution of judicial training in Lithuania. In 2009 there was significant administrative reorganisation of the Faculty, the previously existing seven departments (International and European Union Law; Constitutional and Administrative Law; Theory and History of Law; Labour Law; Civil Law and

Civil process; Criminal Law; Criminology and Criminal Process) partially merged into three: *Public Law* (previously the first three above); *Private Law* (the fourth and fifth); and *Criminal Justice* (the sixth and seventh).

The Programme *European Union Business Law* is one of three postgraduate programmes within the Faculty, the other two being *Criminal Justice* (state code 621M90028) and *Public Law* (state code 621M90029). All three are designed for individuals who have successfully completed undergraduate studies in the relevant field. The Faculty also provides two integrated study programmes (*Law* (601M90001) and Master Degree programme *LL.M. International and European Law* (621M90001), taught in English and Russian exclusively for those trained in law abroad.

Because it is a new programme (launched in 2011), the present is the first external evaluation of *European Union Business Law*. It was externally assessed for the purpose of registration, and accredited for 3 years (until 30 June 2014) by Order No. 1-01-84 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment of 22 June 2011.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The aims and learning outcomes of the programme are formulated following the requirements specified in the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework¹ relating to the seventh level of the qualifications and the second cycle of studies,² as well as the Inventory of Studies in the Field of Law. The aims are: *Training justice administration and legal service professionals with a thorough and profound knowledge of legal regulation of business in national, European and international contexts, equipped with critical thinking and able to carry out independent research, identify and deal with complex problems related to legislative drafting and application in international business environment.*³

The programme focuses on practical activities and is of applied nature; this was emphasised consistently during the evaluation exercise. However, following the principal of consistency

¹ Resolution No 535 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 4 May 2010 regarding the Approval of the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (*Valstybės žinios*, No. 56-2761, 2010).

² Order No V-2212 of the Minister of Education and Science of 21 November 2011 on the Descriptor of Study Cycles (*Valstybės žinios*, No 143-6721, 2011).

³ SER, p 8.

between studies and research as provided by the Law on Higher Education and Research and the Statute of VU, significant attention is paid to research, so that, according to the SER, studies are arranged so as to train students as responsible and proactive professionals with a wide knowledge and need for continuous professional development, as well as active participants in social and public life with high degree of civic awareness. It is designed to train legal professionals, postgraduate education being mandatory for legal professionals, described in the Lithuanian Classification of Occupations (LCO 2008, valid from 1 January 2011), who emerge ready independently and professionally to engage in occupations so classified: as a group of legal professionals (261); lawyer (2611); judge (2612); or a legal professional not elsewhere classified (2619).

Three generic and four subject-specific competences are to be developed and delivered by the programme, as follows:

Generic competences:

1. Analytical and critical thinking: ability to analyse, see links and produce ethical assessment of information;
2. Communication skills: the ability to interact orally and in writing;
3. Learning skills and independence: maintaining professional competence during the period of professional activity through personal development.

Subject-specific competences:

1. Subject-specific legal knowledge: thorough and in-depth knowledge of the legal regulation of business in national and European contexts;
2. Competence of a legal researcher: knowledge and application of scholarly investigation methods in professional life, interdisciplinary thinking;
3. Competence of applying legal knowledge and skills in professional life: identification and solution of complex problems related to legislative drafting and legal application in the international business environment, ability to provide legal services;
4. Communication and adherence to ethical principles: professional behaviour vis-à-vis professionals of other areas and different cultures.

Further detail (the intended learning outcomes) is supplies in the SER (paragraphs 11-12) and the whole is available on the Faculty website, the Catalogue of VU study programmes, and the AIKOS information system.

The programme aims and learning outcomes thus meet the required criteria. They are clear and publicly accessible. The name of the programme describes exactly what it delivers (see also *Curriculum design* immediately below). The blend of academic and professional goals is the correct approach: over-concentration upon the one limits the practical use of the skills acquired, upon the other produces simply a technician and not a well-rounded lawyer. The outcomes are well designed for a niche market (see below) within a relatively stable market for graduates; this will hold true so long as the European Union survives, and Lithuania (and Europe) will require Lithuanians with the legal skills which can be acquired in the programme. They are coherent, mutually compatible, appropriate to a postgraduate study programme of this nature and compare favourably to a large number of postgraduate European law programmes offered (over the course of many years) in the older EU member states.

2. Curriculum design

The structure of the programme is designed to be compatible with the General Requirements for Master's Degree Study Programmes⁴ as well as requirements contained in the Inventory of Studies in the Field of Law⁵ and VU Regulation of Study Programmes.⁶ The duration of the Programme is 1.5 years (3 semesters), and the volume 90 credits; there are a large number of comparable programmes elsewhere in Europe of one year's duration (12 months, often 8 months teaching + 4 months for dissertation), so 1.5 years is generous and of scope quite sufficient to ensure the learning outcomes of the study programme. All 90 credits are from the programme course units. The first and second semesters are devoted to compulsory and optional courses (each 30 credits respectively), and in the third semester, students are required to prepare and defend their final thesis and take a final examination, totalling to 20 and 10 credits respectively. The volume of course units is at least 5 credits, and at least 30 per cent of each course unit (module) are devoted to individual work.

A complete description of the course units is set out clearly and in comprehensive detail in the SER (Annex I).

From the data in Annex 1 it is evident that the programme complies with the requirements set out in the 2010 General Requirements. But the panel brought to bear a keener eye than this upon

⁴ Order No. V-826 of the Minister of Education and Science of 3 June 2010 regarding General Requirements for Master's Degree Study Programmes" (*Valstybės žinios* No. 67-3375, 2010).

⁵ Order No V-1385 of the Minister of Education and Science of 19 August 2010 on the Inventory of the Studies in the Field of Law (*Valstybės žinios* No 102-5306, 2010)

⁶ Approved by Resolution No SK-2012-12-4 of the VU Senate Commission of 2012-06-21 http://www.vu.lt/site_files/SD/Studiju_programu_reglamentas_2012.pdf [2013-10-20].

the curriculum design, for it comprises persons with experience of establishing and managing similar degrees in EU law over several years and in a number of member states. Within the syllabus there is slight overlap between some course units (e.g., Competition Law/Intellectual Property Law; EU Substantive Law/IP Law and Public Procurement Law; Case Law of the Court of Justice/most units) but this is inevitable, indeed desirable as a glue which binds the apparently but misleadingly disparate material together and marks the internal legal logic of EU Law. There is an appropriate mix of the public (EU Substantive Law, EU Finance Law, Public Procurement Law) and private (Competition Law, European Law of Obligations, Conflicts of Law) elements of EU law, and appropriate weight given to each; areas of EU law not included (constitutional and institutional issues, social law ('though there is a course in Labour Law')) are extraneous to a study of 'business law' and, if necessary, will be absorbed by osmosis. The panel is happy to confirm that the syllabus of the programme is appropriate, balanced and comprehensive, and is alive to up-to-date issues which are important in the field. It would go further: this is an excellent syllabus in EU business law.

3. Staff

The programme involves 16 teachers, comprising a cadre for delivery of the curriculum, each with a specialisation within that curriculum as set out in the SER (Annex 2). Full *curricula vitae* are set out in Annex 3.

The 16 programme teachers comprise 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 10 lecturers and 1 assistant. Two are qualified lawyers (*advocatai*), ten continue to practise as such, mostly in private practice, a few in senior public service posts (e.g., the Director General at the European Legal Department within the Ministry of Justice). Eleven (and all who teach in the second cycle of studies save the Director General) have doctoral qualifications. Several have international education and/or experience, a number have significant publications. They have, on average, a remarkable 14.1 years of practical experience amongst them (computed from the data provided in Annex 2 of the SER). Their standing in the community is marked by invitations to provide expert advice to public institutions and private enterprises (SER, para 44, 'though greater detail would be helpful) and, collectively, a number of agreements to provide, for example, conclusions on reviews and recommendations regarding the application of law with the *Aukščiausis Teismas* and the *Apeliacinis Teismas*, and legal expertise on Lithuanian and EU legislation with the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the teachers who attended the on-site visit of the assessment panel were clearly enthusiastic about their teaching and the programme. Taken together, the

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qualifications and standards of the teachers combined with low student numbers (see *Study process and student assessment* below) - the teacher-student ratio in the programme stands currently at a very effective 0.84 – the teaching staff are quite adequate to ensure learning outcomes.

Teachers are employed through a competition procedure or fixed-term contracts as prescribed by the Statute of VU and other legal documents. Performance of all staff is evaluated in a five-yearly cycle in accordance with the procedure established by temporary provisions for performance assessment of VU teaching and research staff and job competition arrangements (approved on 23 February 2010).

The Faculty is party to 66 agreements with foreign university law faculties for faculty student and teacher exchange programmes; within the Erasmus framework, in 2011 six teachers have visited universities abroad, in 2012 three and in 2013 four.

Faculty staff arrange and participate in international scientific conferences and seminars, and give lectures and presentations in foreign languages in different international scientific conferences abroad. Examples were provided in the SER (reporting papers delivered at the German Bundesarbeitsgericht; the J.-W. Goethe Universität Frankfurt; the Sibirskiy Federalnyy Universitet, Krasnoyarsk; the Pazmany Peter Catholic University, Budapest the International Congress on Intellectual Property Rights, Singapore) but by way of ‘to name a few examples’ (SER, para 48). The SER also reports (para 49) that each year more than LTL 120,000 is allocated for Faculty staff to participate in conferences, internships and other professional development courses, but again more detail would have been helpful. Certainly the link between research activities and their input into the study programme ought to be more closely considered, and perhaps made subject to more rigorous review.

In 2011/12 the Department of Qualification Improvement for Personnel and the Centre for Quality Management under the VU Directorate of Personnel organised Training for Teaching Excellence for VU lecturers who wished to improve their didactic competence. The objective of the training was to develop and deepen pedagogical competence of the academic personnel. A number of Faculty teachers took part in the training. Thus, the Faculty appears to value the qualifications, experience and development of staff as an important asset, and encourages research, academic and practical, in the area.

The quality of the teaching staff is an evident strength of the programme. The panel was nevertheless concerned that their obligations outside the university was a significant call upon their time. This is not to say they devoted insufficient attention to their university duties, rather the outside (primary) responsibilities take precedence when it comes to time allocation. Thus, lectures are missed, sometimes on short notice, and the machinery for informing students about it seems to be inadequate. It is exacerbated by the travelling time from the city, where most teachers and some students will be based. It is an issue identified as a problem by programme teaching staff, students and social partners alike. Students were quick to confirm that missed lectures were rescheduled promptly, and they made no suggestion of inadequate time made available by the programme teachers. But the problem cannot but detract materially from the continuity and rhythm and flow of the programme, and its frequency should as much as possible be minimised.

4. Facilities and learning resources

The programme is housed within the principal Faculty premises in Saulėtekis. This presents a slight drawback, as it requires considerable travel time for any teacher or student based in the centre of town to get there. On the other side of the ledger, it is very convenient for a student who lives on site in a university 'dormitory' and boasts very considerable teaching/study accommodation (shared with the rest of the Faculty) of 26 lecture theatres, 22 medium-sized classrooms for up to 50 students and a number of smallest classrooms with between 24 and 30 work places. They are spacious, clean and well kept, and adequate in size and quality for delivery of the programme.

Stationery multimedia equipment with the Internet connection (e.g. a multimedia projector, a graph projector, VHS/DVD, CD and MD players, computers) is installed in almost all Faculty auditoria. In the absence of stationary multimedia equipment, portable equipment is used. Students have access to the wireless Internet network EDUROAM in the premises of the Faculty. They can also use additional electronic resources of the Faculty: each student is given around 250 MB of space to keep files in servers; students can create and publish their own websites.

The VU Centre of Information Technology Development provides various e-services for teachers and students (e-mail, e-mail conferences, wireless academic network EDUROAM, websites, webpage hosting, etc.). E-learning and Examination Centre of Vilnius University provides teachers and students with a possibility of using virtual learning environment and

organising computer-based simultaneous examinations for large groups of students. The equipment available is also adequate for delivery of the programme.

In February 2013 a modern National Open Access Scholarly Communication and Information Centre (MKIC) was opened near the Faculty. The Centre provides great work and study conditions for both University students and teachers alike. The Centre offers 674 work places for its visitors: 432 work stations in reading rooms, 18 work stations with audio/video equipment, 39 work stations in booths for individual work, and 185 work stations in rooms for group work. A new, modern library is being built within 5 minutes walking distance of the Faculty's premises.

Currently students have a possibility of using the reading room of the Faculty of Law, which has 68 work stations, 16 computerised. Students have access to legal data bases, such as Litlex, Beck-online, Loislaw, Westlaw International, the data bases, subscribed by the VU library, as well as to 28,000 publications available in the open fund. Technical equipment of the library provides a possibility of scanning (free service) and photocopying materials free of charge.

Legal publications (books, journals, textbooks) in various languages (mostly in Lithuanian and English) are housed within the Faculty library collection. The materials seem to be reasonably up-to-date. The holdings are not vast, and should be extended and improved so far as tight budgets allow. But this is a universal complaint common to all university law libraries, for books and journals are, more than virtually any other discipline, at the heart of legal education. By Lithuanian standards the holdings are very good, and, combined with the electronic resources available to students, adequate for delivery of the programme. There was a degree of dissatisfaction expressed with the compulsory system of public tender for the purchase of new equipment and services, it taking time and sometimes delivering less than best quality. If the Faculty is not locked into it, it might be worth considering other options.

5. Study process and student assessment

Admission requirements

The programme is open to admission to university graduates with a Bachelor's degree in law or with Master's degree in law, acquired through integrated studies. Admission is carried out pursuant to Admission Rules to Vilnius University Study Programmes.

As the programme began life only in 2011 admission data are still to acquire a recognisable pattern. There were 10 applications for a place in 2011, of whom 8 were admitted; 75 applications in 2012, 17 admitted and 96 applications in 2013, 20 admitted. These data show both a rigorous admissions policy, only 22 percent of applicants gaining admission, and a steady and healthy growth in interest in the programme. Many candidates are products of Mykolas Romeris University. During the three years only two students dropped out, which accounts for 4.4% of all students admitted to the study programme within that period. Both terminated their studies at their own request, the reasons not related to their performance indicators. Other students completed the programme successfully (or are on course to do so).

The numbers of students are relatively small – which is to be expected in a new programme - but growing. This is gratifying: owing to demographic change many law (and other) programmes in Lithuania are shrinking. The programme aims for an optimal admission of around 40 students per year. This seems to the panel to be both (a) achievable over time, for it is a specialist degree in a vibrant market (EU law) which ought to attract applicants, and (b) desirable, as a healthy size for a programme of this sort which is not too large to dilute its quality.

Study methods

The programme includes lectures, seminars and individual work. Contact hours involve not only the classical teaching methods (classical lecture, explanation, analysis of scholarly material, etc.), but also active learning methods (problem-based teaching, learning in groups, discussion, mooted). Seminars and practical sessions are held in groups up to 20 students, using student-oriented methods: brainstorming, group discussion, case analysis, report preparation and presentation (individually or in groups). This is a blend of classical teaching methods with additional emphasis placed upon practical application of theoretical knowledge, which is appropriate to and compatible with the practical, professional orientation pursued by the programme.

In the same vein, significant attention is given to individual work such as thesis writing and other tasks. Individual work makes up 30 per cent of each course unit, as required by the requirements for master's degree programmes. In the first semester, the share of individual work, depending on the choice of course units, ranges from 68.5 to 72.5 per cent, in the second semester it makes 70.5 per cent of total study time. The third semester, when master's thesis is being written and preparations for the final exam are done, independent work time reaches up to 96 per cent.

All of this is compatible with and comparable to similar programmes, and is equal to the task of ensuring the study outcomes. Yet for teaching (not for individual research) the timetabling issues can be identified as a weakness in delivery of the programme.

Student mobility

There is virtually nothing in the SER about student mobility (only reference to decisions of the Dean or Rector ‘regarding study trips to universities abroad for periods of study’, para 104). The students who attended the on-site visit (disappointingly only two; see *Assessment* below) reported it was little discussed but they voiced no great enthusiasm for it. This is perhaps unsurprising in a coherent, concentrated and specialist programme, but at the least the possibility of it could be more widely canvassed.

The thesis

Requirements for the thesis, undertaken and completed in the third semester and worth 20 credits, are set out in the Inventory for the Studies in the Field of Law, the Procedure of Preparation, Defence and Archiving of Final Theses of Vilnius University,⁷ and the Procedure for Writing and Evaluation of a Course Paper and Master’s Thesis at the Faculty of Law of Vilnius University.⁸ These documents require the final work to be carried out and finalised independently by a student which shows an ability to apply the knowledge gained during the studies, to select and use scholarly material (to present, and analyse it, etc.), to apply and modify research methods, independently to accomplish objectives raised, to present conclusions, recommendations, and to put the research in writing in a succinct and orderly way using proper language.

The theses topics on relevant theoretical and practical issues are listed by a relevant department in charge of a specific branch of law. Topics may be put forward by a student with a reasoned explanation submitted to the head of the department. It is defended publicly. The assessment criteria are:

- (1) analysis and summary of scholarly material on the subject;
- (2) analysis of case law and other relevant practical material;
- (3) compliance with the formal requirements; and

⁷The procedure of preparation, defence and storage of final theses of Vilnius University confirmed by the commission of VU Senate in the meeting of June 2, 2005 (minutes of the meeting No. SK-2005-9) http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studijuprocesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45_studijos/studijos/2573#bendrosios_nuostatos [2012-11-30].

⁸Procedure for Preparation, Defence and Archiving of Course Paper and Master’s thesis at the Faculty of Law of Vilnius University, see: www.tf.vu.lt/studijos/studiju-reglamentavimas.

(4) originality, argumentation and independence of the work.

Whilst there were only a fairly small number of theses available to the panel for inspection owing to the recent introduction of the programme, they were very competent work, fairly and accurately assessed in accordance with the above criteria.

Academic support for students

University and Faculty representatives make themselves available on a university website (<http://www.vu.lt/kviecia/klausk>) to respond to students' queries. All information about the study process, fees, scholarships and study financing is provided by a staff member of the Faculty administration, especially appointed programme coordinator. The information is regularly updated on both VU and Faculty websites. Information about the study process is also provided students on a regular basis through the Vilnius University information system for studies (VUSIS). The Students' Representation plays an active role in all this.

In accordance with VU Study Provisions,⁹ students with poor results have the opportunity to improve them and continue their studies. If a student fails an examination, he/she can re-sit within the first two weeks of the new semester. If a student fails to take an examination owing to an illness or any other substantial reason, he/she can request to retake the examination at a different time, but no later than within one month from the beginning of the new semester. If a student fails again when retaking the examination, it becomes an 'academic debt' which must be eliminated by retaking (and successfully passing) the course unit within one year.

Appeal of an examination result lies to a Faculty Commission of Appeals, consisting of five members, two of which students. A decision of the Commission is final save where the question involves the examination procedure, a decision appealable to the VU Dispute Investigation Commission.

Academic leave is possible for a student owing to illness, pregnancy or maternity/paternity care.

These measures addressing poor academic performance and examination results appear to be conscientious and fair.

⁹ Approved by Resolution No SK-2012-12-8 of VU Senate Commission of 21 June 2012 <http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studiju-procesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45-studijos/studijos/2557-studiju-nuostatai> [2012-12-20]

Social support for students

Various scholarly, cultural, artistic, sporting and social facilities are made available to students. Students may have access to financial support of several types, awarded on the basis of high academic achievement, financial need, other social requirements or achievement in culture, sports, scholarly or public activities or meritorious in a specific sphere. Several merit-based scholarships are available within the Faculty. Loan facilities are available.

Assessment

Students are informed at the beginning of the semester of the assessment criteria. In accordance with VU Study Provisions, during the first lecture the teacher introduces the description of the course unit, indicating the forms and procedure of assessment of the achievements, shown throughout the semester and during the examination, as well as the assessment criteria and requirements.

The marking scale is the standard 10-point scale used across VU (and generally throughout Lithuania) e. It is publicised in the VU Study Provisions and on the VU and Faculty websites. It is also fair and transparent.

Students are informed from the start of the Academic Code of Ethics¹⁰ and legal acts regulating studies at VU. Penalties for cheating, plagiarism, etc extend to expulsion from the university. Students' Representation assists in keeping this firmly in students' minds.

There was a disappointing number of students (only two) made available for interview by the panel. This can be explained partly by the small number of students (for the moment) in the programme and the fact that classes were ongoing throughout the assessment exercise. It meant that any student response to the indices which are part of the assessment exercise was perhaps less comprehensive, and representative, that it could have been. Having said that, the students said nothing untoward about the programme (other than confirming the timetabling difficulties), and seemed more than contented with it in all aspects. Overall the study process (subject to one concern; see Recommendations below) and the method of dealing with students in the programme, from admission to completion, is good.

¹⁰ Approved by Resolution No S-2006-05 of VU Senate Commission of 13 June 2006 <http://www.vu.lt/lt/studijos/studiju-procesas/studijas-reglamentuojantys-dokumentai/45-studijos/studijos/2564-akademines-etikos-kodeksas> [2012-12-20].

6. Programme management

Both the Description of General Requirements for Study Programmes of the Second Cycle Study Programmes and the VU Study Programme Regulation provide for a periodic update of a programme and a constant monitoring of its quality. The quality is ensured and improved through an external and internal assessment, the results published, the data analysed, feedback invited and acted upon. Issues of the provision of material resources, the improvement of lecturers' qualification and competences, monitoring and analysis of the course of studies, promotion of innovative teaching and assessment of achievement methods are all considered in due course by the Faculty study programme committee and the Council. The committee is subject to Regulations¹¹ and responsible for the assurance and improvement of the quality of the study programme, so is responsible for the programme and the quality of its implementation. It reports to the Faculty Council at least once per year. It consists of teachers, student representatives and representatives of social partners. The evidence is that quality assurance is taken seriously within the programme and addressed and monitored effectively.

Even so, the University and the Faculty have taken two important steps recently to improve quality control. In 2011 a university project 'The creation and implementation of the internal study quality management system in Vilnius University' was initiated. Within the Faculty 'academic coordinators' were introduced in October 2013. The programme coordinator meets the programme students on a regular basis to discuss the study process, the chosen course units, the methodology of research works, as well as the potential career. The coordinator is also available for the above consultations during the open hours and via e-mail. This office is a welcome addition to the quality control process, and could be instrumental in closing one of the few gaps in the programme's quality (see Recommendations below).

The Committee of the Master's study programme *European Union Business Law* was renewed by Resolution of the VU Senate Commission of 30 August 2011.¹² Its principal task is to improve the programme in view of the integrity of assessment of its objectives, developed competences, contents, methods and achievements, topicality of the programme and competitiveness. To these ends it analyses feedback from Faculty departments, students, graduates, lecturers and social partners. It will sometimes initiate surveys of students and

¹¹Presently draft Regulations of the study programme committee have been drawn up and discussed by the VU Study Committee, and it will be submitted for approval to the Senate Commission.

¹² Resolution No SK-2011-12-4 of the VU Senate Commission of 30 August 2011
<http://www.intranet.vu.lt/images/stories/biuletenis-Nr-11.pdf> [2013-10-20].

graduates and discusses with them programme improvement possibilities and issues relevant to students. VUSIS has proved a useful tool in this endeavour. The SER (para 103) identifies the update of programme aims and content and the preparation and approval of documents relating thereto (for example, description of course units) as fruit of this exercise; none other was identified and, if existing, would be helpful to know.

Information regarding the programme delivery is gathered periodically, primarily through surveys via student questionnaires directed by the Centre for Quality Management and administered via VUSIS electronic questionnaires.¹³ A survey is carried out twice a year at the end of the relevant semester. Summarised results are published on the website of the Centre for Quality Management, while more detailed reports showing results of different departments, are available for the VU academic community via internet. A teacher can see feedback on his course units via the VUSIS and the chairman of the study programme committee sees the feedback of all students of the programme. Since 2011 the VU Career Centre together with other institutions of higher education has been carrying out the career monitoring of graduates, to evaluate whether the science and education system corresponds to the public and economic needs. The first data gathered through this monitoring are expected in 2014.

The SER provides (para 106) a Table reporting the results of a survey on ‘satisfaction in studies’ carried out by the Centre for Quality Management. The data appear, ‘though it is not certain, to date from the end of 2012. The results are nevertheless gratifying, showing a positive evaluation of lecturers’ competence and professionalism and programme delivery generally, in each category higher than that of both the university (by a margin of 10-20%) and the Faculty of Law generally (2, 5, 10, 12 and 15%).

Generally the systems in place for programme management and quality control are thus found to be balanced, fair, transparent and robust.

The Faculty maintains close ties with employers via the Committee for Strategic Planning, which advises the Faculty Dean on key issues of development. An ALUMNI society is also actively involved in helping maintain close contact with professional corporations and employers. There are bilateral agreements with, *inter alia*, the Government of the Republic, the Ministry of Justice,

¹³ The questionnaire on the assessment of the course unit is available at: http://www.kvc.cr.vu.lt/site/sites/default/files/DALYKO%20ANKETA_2009%2005%2027%20_1_.pdf [2012-12-20].

the *Aukščiausiasis Teismas*, *Apeliacinis Teismas* and *Vyriausiasis Administracinis Teismas*, Vilnius and Kaunas District Courts, the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office, the Lithuanian Advocates' Council, the Lithuanian Chamber of Notaries, individual law firms and other legal institutions. These cooperation agreements provide joint activities in the organisation of conferences, composition of joint working groups for the preparation of reviews and recommendations in the field of legal regulation and legal application. It is too early to gauge the programme's success in this, but will be worth exploring in future reviews. There was a good turnout of social partners (including three *alumni*) during the assessment exercise, all of whom showed enthusiastic approbation for the programme, yet supported the one key weakness, which is external staff responsibilities and timetabling.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The panel encountered only one material problem in programme delivery, one agreed by teachers, students and social partners: that of the divided loyalties of the teachers and the need for them to give time priority to their outside (professional) jobs. It is one felt primarily in assessment area 3 ('Staff') but has an indirect impact upon part of assessment area 5 ('Study process'). There is nothing wrong with outside responsibilities, in base financial terms it allows the university to employ highly qualified staff which it could not afford full-time, and in law it is positively helpful in keeping abreast of the very fast moving developments in the relevant field. But there is evidence that it leads to cancelled lectures and teaching generally, which even if rescheduled are disruptive to the continuity, flow and delivery of courses. It also leads to staff wishing to concentrate their teaching (say, squeeze it into one day's attendance at the university) which is by no means ideal: it is not good for the teacher and certainly not good for the students. The problems cannot be avoided entirely, but it is important to try to minimise it as much as possible. The panel invites those responsible for the programme to consider ways this might be achieved. It is suggested that the programme coordinator, who occupies a middle position between staff and students, might be able to play a pivotal role here.

2. The programme is a new one so many of its practices still bedding in. It might therefore be useful for the next assessment panel to consider the extent to which and manner in which the programme has adapted to some issues flagged up (but not criticised) in this report: for example, the professional development of teaching staff and the link between research activities

and their input into the study programme; maintaining and developing the library holdings; and consideration of the effectiveness and success of programme monitoring.

IV. SUMMARY

Even considering the Recommendations above, the panel was very pleased with the programme. It is an important programme to have in all EU member states. Lithuania must produce lawyers trained to be specialists in EU law, not least commercial/business law. This is important not only for the *pistonage* of qualified Lithuanian lawyers to the institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg, but to train a *cadre* of knowledgeable practitioners to work at home – across the legal professions, from judges to advocates to civil servants, local as well as national – and ensure that European law works smoothly within the state; for the advantage not only of the practitioners produced but of the state itself.

This new specialist programme, the first of its kind in Lithuania, is well placed to assume the responsibility. It sits comfortably within a law faculty, its aim and learning outcomes are clear and well defined, backed up by a curriculum which is appropriate to the purpose, well designed, comprehensive and balanced. Whilst the staff was found by the panel to be very well qualified and committed to the programme, there are problems with staff availability and consequent timetabling; these cannot be eliminated but can be ameliorated. The facilities and learning resources are adequate for programme delivery but care must be taken in the upkeep of resources for it is all too easy, in times of budget restraint, to slip back. The study process is well thought out and planned, student care and assessment is carefully, clearly and fairly seen to, and student satisfaction with the programme is evident. The management arrangements are young but stable and seem to be heading in the right direction; care should be taken to ensure that the programme coordinator is afforded the necessary time, resources and attention so that he/she is allowed to add significant value to the programme.

The panel hopes the programme grows and thrives. It deserves to succeed.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme European Union Business Law (state code – 621M90027) at Vilnius University is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	4
2.	Curriculum design	4
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	4
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	4
	Total:	22

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

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

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

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader:

Dr. Robert Lane

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Prof. Mar Campins Eritja

Dr. Raimundas Kalesnykas

Ramūnas Kazlauskas

Birutė Noreikaitė

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vilniaus universiteto studijų programa *Europos Sąjungos verslo teisė* (valstybinis kodas – 621M90027) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	4
2.	Programos sandara	4
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	4
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	4
	Iš viso:	22

* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

IV. SANTRAUKA

Nepaisant pateiktų rekomendacijų, iš esmės ekspertų grupė labai palankiai vertina programą. Tokią svarbią programą būtų naudinga turėti visoms ES valstybėms. Lietuva turi rengti teisininkus, ES teisės specialistus, neišskiriant komercijos ir (arba) verslo teisės specialistų. Tai svarbu ne tik dėl to, kad kvalifikuoti Lietuvos teisininkai atsidurtų Briuselio ir Liuksemburgo institucijose, bet ir tam, kad Lietuvai reikalingi gerai nusimanantys praktikuojantys teisininkai, visų lygių specialistai – teisėjai, advokatai, tarnautojai, vietos ir šalies masto, kurie užtikrintų, kad šalyje bus sklandžiai įgyvendinama Europos teisė, o tai naudinga ne tik parengtiems specialistams, bet ir pačiai Lietuvai.

Ši nauja, pirmoji tokios rūšies studijų programa Lietuvoje, gali parengti kompetentingus specialistus. Ji įgyvendinama teisės fakultete, jos tikslas ir numatomi studijų rezultatai aiškūs ir gerai apibrėžti, pagrįsti tikslą atitinkančiu studijų turiniu, gerai suformuluoti, išsamūs ir subalansuoti. Vertinimo grupės nuomone, dėstytojai labai kvalifikuoti ir atsidavę studijų

programai. Tačiau jie turi ir kitų pareigų už universiteto ribų, todėl dažnai keičiamas studijų tvarkaraštis. Šių problemų išvengti neįmanoma, bet jas būtų galima bent dalinai išspręsti. Materialiųjų išteklių programai vykdyti pakanka, tik būtina juos rūpestingai prižiūrėti (išlaikyti), nes biudžeto ribojimo laikais padėtis gali greitai pablogėti. Studijų eiga gerai apgalvota ir suplanuota, neabejotinai užtikrinama parama studentams, studentai vertinami skaidriai ir sąžiningai, studentų pasitenkinimas programa akivaizdus. Vadybos strategija nauja, bet veiksminga ir nukreipta teisinga linkme; reikėtų pasirūpinti, kad programos koordinatoriui būtų garantuotai skirta pakankamai laiko, išteklių ir dėmesio, kad jis arba ji turėtų galimybę padidinti programos vertę.

Vertinimo grupė tikisi, kad ši programa išaugs ir suklestės. Ji nusipelno sėkmės.

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Vertinimo grupė nustatė tik vieną svarbų programos įgyvendinimo trūkumą, su kuriuo taip pat sutinka dėstytojai, studentai ir socialiniai partneriai: paskirstytas dėstytojų lojalumas ir būtinybė pirmiausiai skirti savo laiką (profesiniam) darbui ne šiame universitete. Pirmiausia minėta problema yra susijusi su trečiąja vertinimo sritimi („Personalias“), bet taip pat turi netiesioginio poveikio penktajai vertinimo sričiai („Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas“). Nieko blogo, kad dėstytojai turi pareigų už universiteto ribų; finansiniu požiūriu iš esmės tai suteikia universitetui galimybę samdyti aukštos kvalifikacijos darbuotojus, kurių jis negalėtų sau leisti samdyti visai darbo dienai, o teisės požiūriu tai labai naudinga dėl to, kad sudaroma galimybė neatsilikti nuo labai sparčios pažangos atitinkamoje srityje. Bet yra įrodymų, kad dėl minėtų priežasčių atšaukiamos paskaitos ir mokymas apskritai, ir, nors tvarkaraštis keičiamas, sutrinka programos tęstinumas, tėkmė, dėstymas. Dėstytojai tokiu atveju stengiasi koncentruoti savo mokymą (sakykime, viską suspėti per vieną apsilankymą universitete), o tai tikrai negerai – nei dėstytojams, nei studentams. Šios problemos neįmanoma išvengti visiškai, bet reikia ją kiek įmanoma sumažinti. Vertinimo grupė ragina tuos, kurie atsakingi už šią programą, apsvarstyti, kaip tai padaryti. Siūloma, kad programos koordinatoriui, kuris yra tarpininkas tarp dėstytojų ir studentų, čia būtų skirtas pagrindinis vaidmuo.

2. Ši programa yra nauja, taigi daugelis praktikų dar tik įsitvirtina. Todėl būtų naudinga, jei kita vertinimo grupė atkreiptų dėmesį į tai, kiek ir kaip ši programa suderinta su kai kuriais šiose vertinimo išvadose iškeltais (bet nesukritikuotais) klausimais, pvz., akademinio personalo

profesinis tobulinimas ir jų mokslinės veiklos bei indėlio į studijų programą ryšys, bibliotekos fondų išsaugojimas bei plėtojimas ir programos stebėsenos veiksmingumas bei sėkmingumas.

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