



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto

KLINIKINĖS PSICHOLOGIJOS PROGRAMOS
(62406S104, 621S16001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY* (62406S104, 621S16001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Klinikinė psichologija</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	62406S104, 621S16001
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	psichologija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	klinikinės psichologijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Clinical Psychology</i>
State codes	62406S104, 621S16001
Study area	social sciences
Study field	psychology
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Cycle of studies	second
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (2)
Scope of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Clinical Psychology
Date of registration of the study programme	1997/05/19

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the self-evaluation report the study programme in clinical psychology is the only one at masters study level offered in Lithuania. That unique feature is both demanding and challenging since the programme needs to serve public needs in both academia and in society.

The demand for clinical psychology specialists is supported by a law from 1995. Health care centres in municipalities focus more on outpatient services including family support in crisis and clinical services. There seems to be a lack in the number of clinical psychologists in Lithuania, as stated in the self-evaluation report. Hence the study programme in clinical psychology offers very promising job opportunities.

Overall one can say that the study programme in clinical psychology serves this purpose well.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The self-evaluation report indicates a clear mission statement concerning the programme aims when it says: "The objective of the programme is to train a clinical psychology specialist who would be scientifically-minded, ethically responsible, able to start an independent professional career in both academic and practical institutions". The organisation of the programme is designed in such a way that a wide range of clinical psychology paradigms are covered: psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic-existential paradigms are all represented. From the stand-point of an academic review this broad range can be seen as one of the strongest assets of the programme. The visit confirmed a fair balance between areas and an acceptance of the need to provide balanced coverage, though the programme inevitably reflects the interests of staff with an emphasis on certain psychodynamic and humanistic approaches.

The programme is judged to meet public needs at a high level.

From the courses offered (explained in detail in the Appendix to the self-evaluation report) it becomes clear that the "learning" paradigm is teacher-centred. That is, the knowledge is presented by the teachers and the students are rather seen as receptors. The process orientation of instruction gives the impression that there is a lack of orientation in the learning outcome paradigm. It is, for example, difficult to see how outcomes such as obtaining practical experience, or learning, or becoming aware of a theory, can be assessed. The content of the programme at the level of individual courses is only partially articulated in a way that ensures that the set objectives and intended learning outcomes are satisfied.

At some point the relation between aims/objectives and learning outcomes needs to be stated more distinctively. Objectives are expressed in a general way, but learning outcomes remain vague in some cases. It is also not clear how the objectives are organized to be assessed. As an example, on page 6 of the self-evaluation report it says that "The students also get to know about the development, emotional and behaviour disorders, modern psychiatry and psychopharmacy." However, it is not mentioned how these objectives are examined, and when the goal is met at a sufficient level. It is thus not entirely clear what competences students are expected to possess on graduating from the masters programme and how they are qualified for the labour market.

To summarise, the aims of the programme are clearly stated and the programme fulfils a national need for clinical psychologists, and provides a balanced training in this area. It is not always clear how all of the learning outcomes can be assessed.

2. Curriculum design

The self-evaluation report points out that the curriculum design meets legal requirements. The curriculum is also equivalent with other European masters studies, and consistent with the Bologna Process.

The modules are well balanced. All three paradigms are required on a mandatory base so that a student gets the full range of the academic discipline. Further specialisation is possible within the study programme. Theoretical, practical and scientific objectives are clearly stated and defined. Nevertheless, as indicated in the previous section, the learning outcomes need more profiled description at the level of individual courses.

According to interviews with staff and employers it can be stated that the masters programme offers excellent job opportunities. Practical field experience is well covered in the curriculum but could with benefit to students be extended. There are compulsory and optional courses offered which allow specialisation in working with children, working with adults, or group counselling. The internship (four months, 16 ECTS) provides a serious chance to combine theory and practice and allows students to gain individual competence. The need for more practica/internships has been expressed by both students and employers.

The methods of learning are appropriate but nevertheless could be strengthened in the areas of self experience and supervision. The expert team is aware that a university cannot cover all aspects of clinical experience, and that there are options where students can gain additional experience. However, the required number of hours seems to be insufficient, and for example individual training in counselling skills could usefully be extended in both hours and amount of supervision.

The idea of integration of paradigms into the individual student's learning experience guides the curriculum design. The well balanced contents meet the state of the art in the field.

Credits given for research and the masters thesis are consistent with masters curricula in other European study programmes. Therefore the programme fully meets the basic academic qualification of Master in Clinical Psychology. In general the methodological input could be increased and more sophisticated methods of investigation for master theses could be employed.

To summarize, the coverage of the material is balanced and students get a good coverage of different approaches, though perhaps with an emphasis on psychodynamic and humanistic approaches (reflecting the interests of staff). Students might benefit from an increase in professional practice and self experience.

3. Staff

The teaching staff meet legal requirements. There is a good combination of academic expertise and practical experience. The expert team agrees with the claim in the self-evaluation document

that the scientific research areas of all the teachers correspond with the subjects they teach, and that staff are active participants in relevant professional organizations.

Teaching staff aim for the integration of theory and practice, and stress ethical standards and methodological competence. The ethos of teaching is good, and there is an understanding of the limits of approaches and a respect for the values and merits of other approaches. Embracing plurality is a high value for the teaching staff. In their own words: “plurality increases critical thinking”.

Some lecturers/practitioners/supervisors are employed for special skills and specific fields of practice. It has to be noted they do not get any extra instruction aimed at enhancing their teaching competence. That may be one reason for the sometimes vague formulation of learning outcomes. Students reported that the form of assessment is more demanding at masters level than for the BA. Students also indicated that the teachers knew them very well.

It is well noted that some of the experienced staff (Gudaitė, Kočiūnas) have qualified to enhance their academic qualifications (via habilitation) and had become professors, and three other young members of staff had defended their doctoral theses successfully.

It is claimed that the burden of teaching is generally high, but nevertheless teachers are available to the students and so the work load does not seem to have a negative effect. The student teacher ratio in supervision of internships/practice is satisfactory (1:4).

International contacts exist with national and international scientific psychological associations. However, not all staff engage in international contacts. In the meeting with staff the team learned that one teacher can apply for one conference a year providing they present a paper. The University needs to find a way to encourage additional attendance at conferences and also sabbatical leaves. The replacement of teachers on sabbatical leaves needs to be managed in order to enhance further academic qualification.

The teaching staff are involved in international and local research related to the study programme. The expert team was pleased to see that the University supports active participation in ERASMUS and Leonardo da Vinci Programmes to enable staff to study abroad.

Research covers mostly local/national fields of interest. The publications are mainly in articles in national journals. Presentations at international conferences are also listed in the Appendix of the self assessment. The scientific research output is satisfactory, despite the fact that the opportunities for publishing in Lithuania in the field of psychology are limited.

To summarise, the staff are of good quality, relate well to their students, and engage in appropriate research and professional activities. Although these are all adequate, there is scope for improvement in international visits, sabbatical leave, research output and staff training.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Libraries and computer labs are a normal requirement for any study programme and are of a satisfactory standard for the masters in Clinical Psychology. There are extra rooms for assessments, counseling and supervision and these all seem to be sufficient.

The access to databases in the field of psychology is extremely good. The integration of the library of the faculty of philosophy with the general library serves well the need for broad access

to international and national resources, books and journals. The library contains quite a number of basic books in other languages than Lithuanian (English, Russian, German).

The teaching staff contribute textbooks, monographs and articles relevant to the field.

The resources in the library are well equipped. Access to databases is remarkably good and the use of WLAN is of high standard.

To summarise, the resources are of good quality in terms of teaching and practical rooms and the library is well equipped, especially with regard to access to electronic resources.

5. Study process and student assessment

The admission requirements are a BA degree in psychology plus an entrance exam, and an acceptance from the committee. Exceptions are possible for some former qualifications with decisions on these made by a departmental committee consisting of members of the Department of Clinical and Organizational psychology.

There is a need to avoid discrimination against applicants from abroad or from other Lithuanian universities, for example by requiring only students from one of these groups to take an entrance examination. The expert team believes it is necessary for the department to clarify and justify the rationale for admission requirements to ensure that they do not disadvantage any group of students. The admissions policy should be communicated clearly to intending students.

There is a majority of female students, which is similar to other European countries. The University might wish to explore why the study programme attracts so many female students (4:1 or higher ratio). Students also pointed out that there are no courses which focus on gender issues.

The assessment system of students' performance is clearly expressed. Every semester has a certain focus and the access to internships allows a good combination of theoretical and practical knowledge.

The final stage is the masters thesis in which the students have a chance to present their accumulated skills. Consultation hours with academic supervisors are organized in a distinct way (minimum 2 hours per week) though in the opinion of the expert group that should be extended. The topics of the masters theses are often relevant to local problems. For the year 2011 there were 21 Master thesis provided and randomly checked by the team of experts. These theses employ a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, with some theses based on a mixed methods approach. Generally a little more stress could be given to advanced methodology in the programme.

The department of psychology takes pride in the fact that the students are supported in extra mural activities. This support seems to be useful and the take-up by students is high.

There are opportunities for students to take part in international programmes. Maybe the mobility of students could be increased by engaging more in ERASMUS or other European programmes.

The language skills of students are satisfactory. There is also a good sense of humour and a warm atmosphere among students and they have a respectful relation to their teachers.

Students expressed a wish to have guarantees that they could always get into the field they wanted to go into, and would appreciate advance information about restricted places and which offered optional courses would run. They would also like more courses on the use of specific instruments and tests.

The employers met by the team hold the programmes offered in high esteem. The job opportunities are described as very good. Employers mentioned explicitly a solid knowledge of the students in clinical psychology. Still, there were also a few comments made about the lack of self esteem. One expressed regretfully the lack of knowledge in Russian, as quite a few clients in the field would understand that language.

Generally the employers are highly pleased with the graduates from the programme and would like to be more engaged with the university.

To summarise, the admission system needs scrutiny to ensure that it is not in any way discriminatory. The assessment system seems to be of good quality. The thesis might be further improved by additional contact with members of staff and by training in advanced methodology. The students acquire good clinical skills and knowledge but they would appreciate more practical experience.

6. Programme management

Psychology at Vilnius University belongs to the Faculty of Philosophy. The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the programme are allocated within the university structures in a hierarchical way. The masters programme is under the umbrella of the Department of Clinical and Organisational Psychology.

According to the self-evaluation report all decisions are supervised by the Directorate of Studies of the University, and the Centre of Quality Management established in 2008. The main function of the latter is the creation of the criteria and indicators of quality assessment, the collection of information on the quality of studies, and management and revision of quality assurance on the University scale.

A system of ongoing feedback is established and it involves a number of stakeholders including teachers, students, and supervisors of internships. The measures used seem to be effective. As one of the results there exists a self critical view on the need for extension of supervised practice in counselling skills of students. Although the present processes seem effective in this case, a more systematic way of obtaining and acting upon feedback in the University would further strengthen the current procedures.

To summarise, the management of the programme is satisfactory, but more systematic collection of feedback from students, employers and other stakeholders might be useful.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clarify and justify the admission criteria for all applicants to the masters programme to ensure that they are fair to all applicants.
2. Elaborate the learning outcomes and ensure that these feed through to the individual courses and to the assessment procedures.
3. Ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the paradigms taught in the MA programme
4. Extend the (supervised) individual counselling practice

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Clinical Psychology* (state codes – 62406S104, 621S16001) 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	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process, student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	20

*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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