

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto

**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *VIEŠOJI TEISĖ (valstybinis kodas - 621M90029)***

**VERTINIMO** **IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**OF *PUBLIC LAW* (*state code - 621M90029*)**

**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Vilnius University

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| **Experts’ team:**   1. **Prof. dr. jur. Jürgen Kohler (team leader)** *academic,* 2. **Prof. dr. Rolf Dotevall,** *academic,* 3. **Dr. Kristi Joamets,** *academic,* 4. **Mrs Dovilė Satkauskienė,** *social partner,* 5. **Ms Janine Wulz,** *students’ representative*.   **Evaluation coordinator - Mrs Eimantė Bogdan** |

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba

Report language – English

**DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ**

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| Studijų programos pavadinimas | ***Viešoji teisė*** |
| Valstybinis kodas | 621M90029 |
| 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 | 2012-07-11 |

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**INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME**

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| --- | --- |
| Title of the study programme | ***Public Law*** |
| State code | 621M90029 |
| Study area | Social Sciences |
| Study field | Law |
| Type 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 | 11-07-2012 |

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes,** approved byOrder No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1)*  *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team at the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

## General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| No. | Name of the document |
|  |  |
|  |  |

## Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

The Faculty of Law at Vilnius University is one of 14 faculties at the university. It is the first faculty of law in Lithuania and the oldest institution in Lithuania for legal education and research.

The Faculty of Law has three departments, Departments of Criminal Justice, Private Law and Public Law, which conduct relevant research and education. With the purpose to encourage high quality research seven institutes are established at the faculty. Among these are the Institute of International and European Law, the Institute of Administrative law, the Institute of Tax law and the Institute of Public Finance.

The Master ‘s Programme in public law is one of three graduate programmes at the Faculty. The programme is aimed for students who have finished undergraduate studies in law and who want to prepare for research or practical work, which require scholarly knowledge in the area of public law.

## The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts‘ recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 12 May 2016*.*

Dr. Kristi Joamets could not take part in the site visit while she was fully integrated in the review process in all its other elements, partly due to use of electronically supported consultation.

1. **Prof. dr. jur. Jürgen Kohler (team leader),** professor of civil law and civil procedure, Greifswald University, Germany
2. **Prof. dr. jur.** Rolf Dotevall, professor of commercial law, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
3. **Dr. Kristi Joamets,** lecturer in business law, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia*.*
4. **Mrs Dovilè Satkauskienè,** director of the Bailiff’s Chamber of Lithuania, Lithuania*.*
5. **Ms Janine Wulz,** research student in social sciences, University of Vienna, Austria.

**General observations:**

Considering the quality features of the programme in line with the quality criteria of study programmes as defined in the current SKVC ‘Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes’, the review team evaluated the master-level study programme ‘Public Law’ (state code 621M90029 provided by Vilnius University (hereinafter abbreviated as VU) with regard to the following items:

* Programme aims and learning outcomes;
* Curriculum design;
* Teaching staff;
* Facilities and learning resources;
* Study process and students‘ performance assessment;
* Programme management;
* Examples of excellence (where applicable).

Each of these items was considered in view of specific sub-items, as indicated in the SKVC methodology; these will be identified when reporting on each of the aforesaid items.

The evaluation team made and verified the following observations, based on the self-evaluation report and documentation provided and on the information given during the site visit.

# **II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

## 2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The evaluation of programme aims and learning outcomes considered and assessed the following criteria:

1. *Well-defined and clear programme aims and learning outcomes, publicly accessible***:**

VU states (SER pp. 7-11) the following programme aims and attaches the following learning outcomes to them: The program is intended for students with at least at bachelor’s degree in law as a preparation for research or to be a practitioner with a specialisation in public law. The purpose is to “prepare for independent research work or practical work that requires scholarly knowledge and skills” (SER p. 7). The overall aims are to develop (1) analytical and critical thinking, (2) communications skills (3) learning skills autonomy.

The evaluation team judges that the aforementioned aims and intended learning outcomes are sufficiently well defined and clear in general terms. The general aims that will be developed are (1) analytical and critical thinking, (2) communication skills and (3) learning skills and autonomy. The more specific aims comprise profound and advanced legal knowledge, research competence, professional practice and awareness of ethical principles to some extent. According to the module descriptions given, the EU dimension is implied in each module.

The learning outcomes are described more detailed and in an informative way in annex No 4 of the SER.

The specifications of aims and learning outcomes are publicly accessible on the website of VU Faculty of Law and in the Catalogue of VU Study Programme.

1. *Reference of programme aims and learning outcomes to academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market*

The law faculty at VU apply a scheme and a procedure, that ensure the alignment of programme aims and learning outcomes to academic and professional requirements, public and employment needs.

The law faculty identifies the main professional opportunities for those who are graduated from this master’s programme. These opportunities cover a broad spectrum of different positions from independent research work to jobs related to the protection of public interest, Governmental and municipalities institutions, ombudsman institutions, public administration etc. But the programme will also be suitable for those who look for a job as a prosecutor, advocate and bailiff. It seems that this is a realistic assumption. Even if one purpose with the programme is to prepare for research work the predominant character of the programme to focus on tasks of an applied nature.

This master programme gives the students knowledge and skill, which is not accomplished on the bachelor level. Those who graduate from the programme will have a comprehensive and profound knowledge of Lithuanian public law and also relevant EU law. Since the review team does not find elements of comparative law in the programme, which would be more significant than those to be expected in most general master’s programme in Public Law, the programme is rightly not flagged out as an “international” public law programme.

The master’s programme meets the demand from the public sector in Lithuania to have highly qualified specialists in public service in general, in the judiciary and as governmental legislators. It is evident that the programme makes the area of public law more popular among students and also will improve the knowledge in this area of law among civil servants and other professionals.

There is only one other master’s programme in public law in Lithuania. But this programme has a different focus as the one given by VU law faculty. For that reason and despite the general character of the VU master’s programme, there seems to be no risk for an overlap.

The master’s programme was introduced in 2012. The study plan has since then been modified with an optional course in tax administration, financial institutions and optional courses concerning for example protection of personal data and state farm regulation.

The Team concludes that programme aims and learning outcomes meets professional requirement and public needs. This is also confirmed by the social partners and employers.

1. *Consistency between the programme aims and learning outcomes and the type and level of studies and the level of qualification offered*:

The master’s programme carries 90 credits. In the first and second semester there are compulsory and optional courses; each consists of 30 credits. At the end of every course there is an examination. The third semester is dedicated to a master’s thesis and final examination.

There are three compulsory courses in the first semester and two optional ones. The optional courses are intended to give students knowledge, which is necessary to fulfil duties in professional practice “for protecting (defending) public interest by legal measures”.

The compulsory courses encompass more fundamental and principle issues in the area of public law. The courses have a purpose to protect as it is called “the public interest”. This does not mean a strong “pro-state” perspective. Also citizen rights are covered in a balanced way.

The optional courses give the students a possibility not only to deepen their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in general but also to develop a speciality within the public law area in a broad sense. Constitutional law is not given in a specific course but is en element in most modules. This is also the case concerning human rights.

The master’s thesis is an individual work, which is written in the third semester of the programme. An important purpose with the thesis is not only to show the skill in analysing legal problems but also to present it in a paper.

The review team concludes that VU faculty of law has made sufficient provision to ensure alignment of programme aims and learning outcomes (notwithstanding criticism in detail, as outlined in item 2.2 hereafter), and to meet the standards required for a master programme.

1. *Compatibility of the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualification offered:*

There is no doubt that the title of the programme, Public Law, is compatible with its purpose, declared learning outcomes, content and qualification offered.

## 2.2. Curriculum design

The evaluation of curriculum design is considered and assessed according to the following criteria:

1. *The Curriculum design meets legal requirements:*

The VU master’s programme in public law is described as a three semesters programme of a total of 90 ECTS credits. Each semester is no less than 30 ECTS. The first semester 20 credits consists of mandatory courses and 10 credits optional courses. In the second semester mandatory courses comprise 15 credits of 30 credits. The master’s thesis in the third semester contains 30 credits.

According to the study programme, student’s individual workload is 30 per cent of each course unit. In the first and second semester the individual workload is 74 and 76 per cent of the total study time. On the third semester when the master’s thesis is written and preparation for final exam is done the individual workload is up to 92 per cent.

The information is verified from the review team. Therefore, the VU master’s programme in public law fulfils the legal requirements as outlined in the relevant order to the Lithuanian Education and Science Minister of 3 June 2010.

It can be stated that the VU master programme Public law is in line with the national requirement for second-cycle studies as well as requirements for law study programmes in general and the VU regulation.

1. *Study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly, their themes are not repetitive:*

Each mandatory course carries seven or eight ECTS credits, with the exception of the first course in the programme, “Problems of Law Making”, which carries five ECTS credits. The master thesis and final examination in the third semester carries 30 ECTS credits.

Compulsory courses in the first semester cover problems of law making, protection of public interest and public service. The compulsory courses in the second semester cover jurisprudence of public administration and the regulation of financing public functions.

The optional courses cover a broad area of what traditionally comprises in public law. The wide range of optional courses cover for example protection of personal data, tax administration, territorial planning and construction law, state regulation of economy, regulation of financial institutions, administration of education and public contracts.

The review team concludes that it is clear that subjects in the mandatory as well as the optional courses are not repetitive. For validity of distinction between mandatory and optional courses, see comment under E. hereafter.

1. *The Content of the Subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies:*

The content of the courses in the master’s programme are described in details in Annex No 5 of the SER. It is clear that overall alignment of the study programme title and content as well as related intended learning outcomes is ensured. It is also clear, according to the SER and the interviews with the members of the staff, that, in principle, these elements are consistent with the level of provision expected at master level. However, the review team also heard that students felt that some programme elements, such as ‘problems of law making’, show some overlap with certain bachelor programme elements.

It can be concluded that, generally speaking and the critical student statement mentioned above notwithstanding in principle, the content in the modules is consistent with the requirements for a master programme.

*D. The content and methods of the subject/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes*

The description of the different study courses with the legal issues considered and the purpose of the course is extensive (Annex No 5 of the SER). There is also a description of the learning outcomes. The teaching and learning methods are also described for each course and the assessment methods. In addition, there is a list of the articles and books, which the students are required to read. VU does not emphasize any specific learning method.

It follows from the SER and there is no doubt that the content of each course is appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the programme. The learning methods vary from each course depending on the subject that is in focus. In each course the students have to train oral and written argumentation, problem based learning is also a common learning method of the programme.

Generally students are fostered in a research-oriented atmosphere to achieve research related quality in their work.

The procedure to ensure that the master thesis is adequate in terms of academic standard is sufficient. The thesis must be defended orally. The purpose with the thesis is to show the ability of the students to do research of good quality. The thesis should demonstrate that the student has a sufficient analytical capability to analyse problems.

The features above could be verified in interviews with staff and students during the site visit. The examination papers and the term papers as well as the master’s theses which the team could see and scrutinize during the site visit also indicate adequacy of teaching modalities to match the aspired learning outcomes at master level.

Different methods are used in teaching. The programme includes traditional lectures and seminars but also individual learning. The different methods are combined. Students have an opportunity to contact teachers during their assigned “contact hours”. From the SER (p.15) it is clear that this “contact hours” could involve different teaching methods than lectures. In the programme there are examples of active teaching learning methods, for example problem based teaching, learning in groups etc.

The review team concludes that the content and methods of the modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

1. *The scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes:*

The extent of the scope of the Master’s Programme in Public Law is measured on the compulsory courses. It is clear that those courses in some extent cover important core subjects for advanced studies in public law. The optional courses, two out of five for the first semester and three out of six on the second semester, offer each student a possibility to specialize in a specific area.

The review team strongly remarks that it is difficult to see the rationale in all cases as regards the choice to label them as mandatory rather than as optional. The example is the course “public service” which is mandatory in the first semester. The course description shows that the course content is largely focussed on matters of employment in the public sector. While this is a valid field of interest, the review team views its scope and aspiration as being rather that of an optional course for students with a special interest, especially since its content and academic aspiration is not in line with the overarching, basic aspects of public law as represented in the other courses constituting the mandatory part of the programme.

The review team also queried why the faculty decided not to highlight courses on human rights or on matters of constitutional law in the programme. The faculty explained that these matters were covered in bachelor programmes, and moreover, that these matters permeate all public law courses anyway. The review team views this statement as valid and correct. The faculty may nevertheless be advised to consider whether or not there is scope for more in-depth reflection on these matters in a masters’ programme, which can only be provided in specific courses.

1. *The Content of the Programme reflects the Latest Achievements in Science, Art and Technologies*

VU has an aspiration to provide relevant academic information to the members of the staff. The members of the staff are encouraged to engage in research activities with the ambition that the current academic discussions and results are reflected in the study programme.

The programme content, as described in the study course description, and the ambitious topics set for the master theses indicate the aspiration of the VU masters’ programme in public law to provide up-to-date input in terms of academic and professional relevance. In matters of staff, lecturers are encouraged to engage in research personally, thus making transfer of research experience into teaching and learning likely. The interview with social partners showed that these appreciated the specific competence of graduates in public law.

## 2.3 Staff

The evaluation of human resources as an input factor considered and assessed the following criteria concerning qualitative and quantitative features of teaching staff:

1. *The study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements:*

The VU was provided by the following staff: During the academic year 2015/2016 the courses are delivered by 4 professors, 6 associate professors, 5 lecturers and 1 assistant. All of the professors and lecturers, except two of the lecturers and the assistant, have a doctoral degree.

The expert team concludes that staff meets legal requirements set for masters’ programmes. Far more than 20 per cent of the major study field subjects are taught by professors.

1. *The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes:*

The VU law faculty involves professors, associate professors and lectures. The CVs for those involved in the programme are presented in Annex No 2 of the SER. Some teachers have also university degrees from foreign universities and gathered experience in foreign universities and research institutions. Most of the teachers are active researchers (SER, table 9). Some teachers have experience as legislators, judges and lawyers from public administration also within the EU-administration.

The programme also engage some qualified professionals, such as judges of the constitutional court, the president’s chief legal adviser etc.

The review team has observed that the competence of the staff is very high in terms of academic experience and professional skill.

As for teaching matters in terms of student-centred, competence-focussed and outcome-oriented teaching, the expert team concludes from comments in the meeting with students that there is some scope for updating practices. In some cases, teaching seems to be made in a traditional way of imparting knowledge while the amount of student activity could be extended, for instance by including them more in case studies, problem-based learning, and on-hand involvement of research currently conducted by their teachers. There was also a voice stating that the literature recommended was not updated sufficiently. The expert team therefore concludes that “teach-the-teacher” activities could be increased.

1. *The number of teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes:*

More than 20 teachers are involved in the programme. The number of students in the study programme is around 10 each year.

The review team concludes that the number of teaching staff is adequate for the programme.

1. *Teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme*:

There is, according to the SER and what review team observed during the visit, no doubt that the body of highly qualified personnel is sufficient for the provision of the programme.

1. *The higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme*:

VU has several agreements with foreign universities for teachers exchange programme. Faculty teachers go abroad regularly (SER p. 19 note 39). In the framework of the ERASMUS programme five teachers went abroad in 2011, three in 2012, five in 2013, five in 2014 and one in 2015. Each year the Faculty can dispose more than 35 000 € for teachers who want to participate in conferences.

It is evident for the review team, as said before, that the teachers who are involved in the programme are highly competent. While the expert team could not fully identify the proportion between classic teaching, i.e. lecturing, and active learning methods, the expert team has an impression based on the interviews with students that classic teaching methods are dominant. The review team concludes that the learning outcomes could be improved if the proportion of active teaching method is increased. The interview showed that the teach-the-teacher facility and didactic support could be improved as regards fostering teaching quality in that direction, which should be seen as an institutional responsibility of VU. While the expert team fully appreciates the academic content of the programme and the academic competence of those delivering it, the expert team feels that the faculty should pay full attention to ensuring competence- and learning-outcome oriented teaching methods, in particular since the “European Standards and Guidelines in Quality Assurance 2015” – an integral part of the Yerevan Communiqué promulgated in developing the “European Higher Education Area – attach major importance to such orientation of teaching in higher education institutions.

1. *The teaching staff of the programme is involved in research directly related to study programme being reviewed:*

A list of publications is attached to the SER. From this information and information received during the site visit it can be concluded that a majority of the teaching staff is engaged in research activities related to the programme. VU is involved in several research projects in public law (SER p. 19, table 10). Project titles are for example “History of Lithuanian Constitutionalism, Collective Agreements and Their Role in the Creation of Quality employment relations and Research on the Possibilities to Increase the Efficiency of Labour Disputes.”

## 2.4. Facilities and learning resources

The evaluation of the facilities and learning resources as an input factor considered and assessed the following criteria concerning qualitative and quantitative features of facilities and learning resources:

1. *Adequacy of the premises for studies, both their size and quality:*

Classrooms and auditorium of the Faculty situated in the campus of Saulėtekis are used. There are different sizes of the classrooms, from 24 places to over 200 places. This makes it possible to use different pedagogical methods.

Multimedia equipment with Internet connection is installed in almost all auditoriums.

The library at VU is very well equipped.

1. *Adequacy of the teaching and learning equipment (library and computer equipment, consumables), both in size and quality:*

Stationary multimedia with Internet connection is found in nearly all auditoriums. Students can use wireless Internet, EDUROAM, in the faculty buildings. Centre of Information Technology Development of VU provides various electronical services for students and teachers. There is also a possibility to organise computer-based examinations.

1. *Adequate arrangements of the higher education institutions for students’ practice:*

After reviewing the material resources on the site visit the review team concludes that there are enough rooms and other facilities for students’ practise, learning and teaching in general. University agreements with employers make it possible for students to have voluntary internships in law firms, courts and companies.

1. *Adequacy and accessibility of teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases*:

As mentioned before the students have access to legal databases such as Litlex, Beck-online, Westlaw international subscribed by the VU library. The students have also access to 28 000 publication available in open fund. Students can access electronic information and learning systems from outside VU locations.

The expert panel concludes that the students on the programme are provided with high-quality library resources and adequate databases.

## 2.5. Study process and students‘ performance assessment

The evaluation of study process and students’ performance assessment considered the following criteria:

1. *Well-founded admission requirements:*

The admission to the programme follows University’s Admission Rules. Students admitted to the programme should have a bachelor’s degree in law from another Lithuanian university. Also a Bachelor’s degree in law from foreign universities is accepted. The conclusion is that the admission requirements are well-founded.

Around 10 per cent of the students, 4 persons have quitted the programme during the period of 2012 to 2015. One of the students was dismissed due to weak performance. The other 3 students left the programme due to personal reasons.

1. *The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes*:

Several factors contribute to a proper implementation of the programme. All students can get access to information about the studies in different ways. There is a university website enabling students to get answers on their questions related to the programme content, its requirements and to the study processes.

The Students’ Representation body (Student Union) supports students in a broad sense. This body does not only defend student interests in different situations but also arranges a great variety of activities and promotes student traditions.

According to the VU regulation, those students who have failed in their studies may improve their results and continue on the programme. A student disagreeing with the outcome of a specific examination can appeal in written form.

It is clear from table 11 in the SER that the ratio between successful applicants and the number of graduated students is very high; for 2013 and 2015 all students who were admitted to the programme did also graduate.

If a student is not able to continue his or her studies for personal reasons it is possible to have academic leave.

1. *Students are encourage to participate in research and applied activities:*

There are many opportunities for the students in the programme to participate in research related activities. A student can, for example, join conferences, participate in summer schools and attend guest lectures given at VU. The several centres of foreign law at VU regularly arrange lectures with foreign speakers.

Another opportunity to participate in research activities is through membership in the Student Scientific Society (the SSS). Students can do research and present a report on a conference or publish an article.

Students can be engaged in applied activities in the “VU Clinic of Law”. This enables them to provide free legal assistance and consultations on legal issues.

1. *Students have opportunity to participate in student mobility programmes:*

The students enrolled in the programme have the opportunity to study abroad within the ERASMUS-framework. VU has 66 partner universities in the ERASMUS-network.

The international perspective at VU is well served. Guest lectures are regularly given which the students can attend.

ELSA is also active in VU and organises activities with an international perspective. There is no information about the frequency or number of participation students in the SER.

1. *The higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support:*

The students at VU can get financial support. A scholarship is granted to students who perform well. Normally those students do not have any debts when they graduate. There are merit-based scholarships awarded to the best students in a specific area of law. There are also social scholarships available for those students who come from low-income families. There are also scholarships for achievements in culture, sports etc.

Students can also take loans from the state and loans from credit institutes which are supported by the state. The purpose with the loan is to pay tuition fees, living costs also during a study period abroad.

The review team concludes that there is sufficient student support.

1. *The assessment system of students’ performance is clear, adequate and publicly available:*

The assessment system is transparent due to publicly available information. Specific information can be given individually. All information about the study process, such as schedules of lectures and examination and procedure for performance assessments, is provided by a staff member of the faculty administration. This person is appointed as programme coordinator.

In addition to this, information about the study process is provided through VU information system (VUSIS). Students have in this system access to their own personal data and they can get knowledge about announcements and rules.

The expert team finds the information about the assessment system satisfactory.

1. *Use of methods and strategies for tackling plagiarism and cheating:*

The Master’s thesis must be submitted to the department also in electronic format. Then not only students but also teachers and evaluators have full access to the thesis. At least ten days before the defence the thesis is entered in to the students’ data base. When the thesis is downloaded to the system, an Electronic Plagiarism Detection System (EPDS) verifies that there is nothing which is not authentical.

To prevent plagiarism and cheating VU applies different means. At the beginning of the programme, the students are introduced to the Academic Code of Ethics and other rules which regulate studies at VU. A student who has not behaved according to the mentioned Code of Ethics and the other rules at VU can be expelled from the university.

1. *Professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme providers’ expectations:*

A survey published in 2010 shows that those who graduated from VU are employed. A vast majority of the graduated students, 91 per cent, found a job within three months after graduation. A majority, 87 per cent, were of the opinion that their first employment was adequate to their study field. 80 per cent of them answered that they often used the knowledge from their studies professionally. While the de-facto base of judgement in the given programme is still too narrow to allow for full assessment, such positive employment effects can also be expected in the programme evaluated here, in particular so since many students of the programme are already in some kind of employment related to law.

The VU has a strong ambition to have close connections to employers. VU has also bilateral agreements with the highest official bodies in the country. It is the purpose of the agreements to provide joint activities such as the establishing working groups for preparations of reviews and recommendations concerning legal regulation. Potential employers in this network regularly arrange events to facilitate for the students to get familiar with them.

## 2.6. Programme management

The evaluation of programme management considered the following criteria:

1. *Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated:*

Responsibilities for decision and monitoring of the programme are allocated as follows:

The Committee of the Master’s programme for Public Law has been approved by a resolution from 2012 of the VU Senate Commission. The Committee consists of faculty lecturers, student representative and social partner, named in the SER (p. 28-29). The main task for the Study Programme Committee is to improve the programme in general. As the basic information for this task, the committee uses the feedback from the faculty departments, students, graduates, lecturer and the partners of the programme. The committee can also initiate surveys among the students and graduates with the purpose to improve the programme.

The faculty administration and the lecturers can use VUSIS to get information about study plans. This information system gives also the possibility to draw, edit and also to observe changes and improvement in the programme.

The conclusion is that the responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation are clearly allocated.

1. *Information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed:*

Information about the students’ activity in the programme is collected regularly. This is the main form for acquiring knowledge about the opinion of the students’ participation the programme. This survey is implemented by the Department for Studies of VU in the electronical questionnaire provided by VUSIS. This survey covers teacher performance at module level. This survey is done twice a year in the end of each semester. The results are published on the website of the Department for Studies of VU. More detailed information is available for the academic staff on intranet.

The expert team could not establish hard evidence as to the extent to which VU or the law faculty scrutinizes the programme aims, the intended learning outcomes, the compilation and progression, the support and in particular the assessment processes on a holistic and systematic base, including full routinized enquiries with graduates and social partners. The expert team may therefore suggest that there may be scope for readdress the aforesaid features comprehensively, thus ensuring the fit-for-purpose design of the programme.

1. *The outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme:*

Each teacher can be informed of the data of the survey mentioned above. Also the chairman of the study programme committee can be informed about the feedback from the students in the same way as a teacher via VUSIS. The review team finds that it could be questioned if this process is giving enough and adequate information.

1. *The evaluation and improvement process involve stakeholders*

The mentioned research from the Public Policy and Management Institute (2010) seems to be the only information from the stakeholders about the integration of the graduated students on the labour market. However, the Study Programme Committee consists of lecturers, student representatives and social partners. The social partners contribute with information about the knowledge and skills which are needed on the labour market.

1. *The internal quality measures are effective and efficient*

The quality of the programme is ensured and, when needed, improved through an internal and external procedure with a constant focus on the feedback from the students and social partners. The results of the assessment are made public. Based on this information the Study Programme Committee and the Council consider changes in the programme. The Study Programme Committee is responsible for the assurance and improvement of the quality of the programme. This committee is subordinated the Faculty Council and has a duty to inform the Faculty Council about all matters relevant to the quality of the programme.

The objectives of the Study Programme Committee are included in Regulations of the study programme committee in VU Study Regulations, in the Procedure for the Recognition of Study Results.

The coordinator of the study programme must meet the programme students regularly to discuss the study process, the chosen course unit, the methodology of research works and also the future career.

Overall judgement: The review team considers the process management, in particular the quality assurance system, to be sufficiently developed to meet the standard requirements of such a system, notwithstanding the desirability to sharpen the system by developing more holistic, routine tools of quality assurance and to foster ‘quality culture’ even more. The social partners could be involved in a greater extent. The information about the integration of the graduated students integration in the job market could be more up-dated. Routines for the procedure to collect information about this should be implemented.

## 2.7. Examples of excellence \*

The Master’s Degree Study Programme Public Law shows the following features of excellence:

1. The programme focusing on public law is needed in a first study level in Lithuania. It provides a bridge between practical application of law and academic approach welcomed by both students and employers in the public sector and the advocacy.

2. The mandatory courses give a fundament for the student to develop individual interests in the choice of optional courses. The optional courses cover a great variety of subjects and give the student good opportunities to specialize in a comprehensive way in the field of public law.

3. The teachers involved in the programme are highly qualified and are in great extent active researchers.

4. Students have very good opportunities to gain experience via voluntary internships from different parts of public administration.

# **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. More stringency as to division between compulsory and optional courses is desirable, as is ensuring avoidance of undue overlap with bachelor programmes while there may also be a need to clearly emphasize aspects of constitutional law and human rights beyond merely implying these legal aspects in the modules.

2. It is evident that the teachers involved in the programme show high academic and practical competence. As many teachers are professionals it is important to design a holistic process of quality assurance to ensure didactic competence, especially by fostering student-centred learning with a view to competence-oriented learning outcomes. To this end, ensuring broad involvement in a “teach-the-teacher programme” may be helpful.

3. The stakeholders could be more involved in the programme and more efficient procedures should be implemented to collect information about the integration of the graduated students in the labour market.

# **IV. SUMMARY**

The Master’s Degree Study Programme Public Law is intended for students with a bachelor’s degree in law. The purpose of the programme is to prepare the students for research or to be highly skilled practitioners with a specialisation in public law. The aims and intended learning outcomes of are sufficiently well defined and clear in a general view. The more specific aims with the programme comprise profound and advanced legal knowledge, research competence, professional practice and awareness of ethical principles. Most modules encompass an EU-dimension and Constitutional law.

The supply of courses, both mandatory and optional, covers a broad area of public law. The students graduating from the programme seem to be well prepared for qualified jobs in the public sector. The programme meets the demand from the public sector to have highly qualified specialists in public service in general, in the judiciary and as governmental legislators. They will also have knowledge about law making.

The mandatory elements of this Master’s Programme are broad enough to cover the essential parts of public law. The courses have a purpose to protect as it is called “the public interest”. The perspective is not a narrow “pro-state”; also citizen rights are covered in a balanced way. The optional courses give the student a good opportunity for specialisation according to individual interest. The optional courses seem to be of a more applied character.

It is clear that the overall alignment of the study programme title and content are well related with intended learning outcomes. These elements are consistent with the level of provision expected at master level. The students are fostered in a research-oriented atmosphere to achieve research related quality in their work.

The competence of the teachers involved in the programme is very high in terms of academic and professional skill.

The study programme will prepare students to perform well when they are employed or will continue on a PhD-project.

**The Master’s Programme could be improved regarding the following aspects:**

The extent of the scope of the Master’s programme is measured on the compulsory courses. Those courses cover important core subjects for advanced studies in public law to some extent. The optional courses offer each student a possibility to specialize in a specific area. It is difficult to see the rationale in all cases as regards the choice to label a course mandatory rather than as optional.

There should be a more holistic approach to the design of the curriculum. The reasons for making a course mandatory should be reconsidered.

The European programme for quality assurance emphasizes teaching quality, especially with a view towards shifting „from teaching to learning“ and towards competence-based learning outcomes. Therefore, it must be evident that there is a didactically oriented enhancement process in place which is made use of in a broad manner.

# **V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

The study programme *Public Law* (state code – 621M90029) at Vilnius University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Evaluation Area** | **Evaluation of an area in points\*** |
| 1. | Programme aims and learning outcomes | 4 |
| 2. | Curriculum design | 3 |
| 3. | Teaching staff | 3 |
| 4. | Facilities and learning resources | 4 |
| 5. | Study process and students’ performance assessment | 4 |
| 6. | Programme management | 3 |
|  | **Total:** | **21** |

\*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: | Prof. dr. jur. Jürgen Kohler |
| Grupės nariai:  Team members: | Prof. dr. Rolf Dotevall |
|  | Dr. Kristi Joamets |
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