



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto  
***MARKETINGO IR TARPTAUTINĖS KOMERCIJOS***  
**PROGRAMOS (621N50003)**  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
***OF MARKETING AND INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE***  
**(621N50003)**  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Vytautas Magnus University

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
Report language - English

Vilnius  
2013

## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Marketingas ir tarptautinė komercija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621N50003
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Rinkodara
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	Rinkodaros magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

## INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Marketing and International Commerce</i>
State code	621N50003
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Marketing
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Level 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 of Marketing
Date of registration of the study programme	19-05-1997

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter – VMU) is a classical University of Liberal Arts and sees itself as ‘...orientated towards humanist culture’. It has a core emphasis on studying broadly themed courses in order to uphold humanist culture, avoiding limitations of narrow and highly-specialised studies. The University is committed to ‘be critical and engaged, to be international and multi-lingual, to promote creativity in Science and the Arts’, promoting ideals of empathy, inter-cultural understanding, openness, equality, choice and human rights. The University Governance and Management are defined by the Statute. The Rector has the advice and support of the Rector’s Council, which consists of the Deans of Faculties and the Directors of Administrative Offices. The faculties are managed by the Faculty Council, the Dean and the Dean’s Office. There is a self-governing Student Representative Council.

VMU study and research units (faculties, departments, and research centres) cover a broad spectrum of subjects within all fields of studies and research, ranging from humanities and social sciences, hard sciences and environmental sciences and biotechnologies to the arts. In the context of Lithuania, VMU is a middle-size university, having 10 000 students studying at all levels of BA, MA, and PhD programmes. The number of its academic faculty members is close to 500 (non-academic staff members account for another 500).

The core responsibilities for study programmes’ administration at VMU belong to the departments and their administrative bodies (heads of departments and administrators). Programme content (subjects taught, their management, and quality assessment) is managed by Study Programme Committees. Additional support is provided by a number of non-academic units, such as: the Office of Academic Affairs (design of study plans, material resources arrangements and lecture room planning), International Office (student and staff exchange visits and international networking opportunities), Centre for Quality and Innovations (programme national and international rankings, quality assessment projects), Innovative Study Institute, Centre of Foreign Languages, Career Competence Centre, etc.

The Master Programme in *Marketing and International Commerce* (hereinafter – the Programme) at VMU is implemented by the Department of Marketing within the Faculty of Economics and Management, earlier (before 2009) – by the department of Economics. Duration of Master studies in this faculty is either 2 years, 4 semesters, 120 ECTS or 1,5 years, 3 semesters, 90 ECTS (currently – just one programme of this duration). The analysed Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* is 2 years and 4 semesters, 120 ECTS and has been registered in the current format in 1997.

The International External evaluation of the programme took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, and included a site visit to the University campus in Kaunas. The Team of Experts was Chaired by Paul O’Sullivan (Ireland), and consisted of Prof. habil. dr. Csaba Forgács, Prof. dr. Jürgen Bruns (he was absent due to health reasons), Prof. Marie-Paule Sheard (UK), Prof. dr. Sigitas Urbonavičius (Lithuania), Darius Bagdžiūnas, (Lithuania, social partner), Justinas Žalys, (Lithuania, student).

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

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

The overall aim of the Master Study Programme in *Marketing and International Commerce* is to develop marketing and international commerce specialists of high qualification who, having

mastered the most recent marketing theories and methods, are able to analyse tendencies and changes in the market independently, follow and evaluate scientific innovations, as well as apply the knowledge for the development of organisation marketing management.

The text of SER informs that graduates will acquire the generic and specific competences to integrate theoretical, empirical and methodological knowledge acquired during the studies (page 8, Paragraph 15.). However, it would be convenient to find the main general and specific competences right in the text after this statement. Since the text on page 23 (Paragraph 80) suggests that the terms ‘programme learning outcomes’ and ‘competences’ perhaps are used in this document as synonyms, it may be convenient to find here a list of either acquired competences or programme learning outcomes, since they represent the important part in presenting the essence of the programme.

The list of the Programme’s learning outcomes includes 6 items and is provided in the Annex 4, Table 4 (relating them to the outcomes of specific subjects). It is stated that the learning outcomes are developed in order to reflect the requirements of the Lithuanian labour market, and this argument is well supported with relevant references (page 8, Paragraph 16). All the references provide evidence about the need for marketing specialists of this level, thus ensuring good employment of the graduates. However, the references support the marketing aspect of the Programme much stronger, than the aspect of international commerce, which also plays an important role at least in the title of *Marketing and International Commerce* study Programme. Also, it may be considered stronger methodological aspect to be included in the learning outcomes of the Programme: the outcome number 3 (‘perform marketing research using modern analytical methods’) definitely requires knowing methodological basis for the research.

The Programme’s learning outcomes are renewed / amended according to the established formal procedure, in which the main role is taken by the members of the Programme committee. While doing this, they take into account changes in the business environment, economic and social changes, demographic processes and other issues that might be of importance for updating learning outcomes of the Programme. However, the role of social partners could be more visible in this process; students’ voice also should be heard not just from formal surveys and considered.

The definitions of the learning outcomes are understandable and realistic, just some expressions perhaps suffer from the translation imperfections (“...marketing and other areas close to it”; outcome 3, outcome 5), which make some statements not very precise.

The information on the Programme aims and learning outcomes are publicly accessible through the system “AIKOS” and numerous other relevant websites (<http://www.vdu.lt>, <http://www.evf.vdu.lt>) and publications (such as “Studies @VMU / 2013”), therefore accessibility of this information is really good.

In general, the aims and learning outcomes of the Programme are appropriate for the qualification of Master in Marketing.

It may be noticed that the term “International Commerce” in the title of the Programme may be interpreted rather broadly, and in a several different ways. The current structure of the Programme does not reflect that strong emphasis on international trade or on selling activities; it rather reflects more general issues of international business development and international marketing. This makes the fit between the title of the Programme and its content not really ideal, and this gap should be removed. Knowing that the term “commerce” is less and less used in the context of modern studies, it would be advisable to consider modifying the title of the Programme, despite its traditions and Programme popularity among the candidates.

Other than that, the title of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other.

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

The Programme in *Marketing and International Commerce* at VMU is implemented since 1997. Up to 2009, the Programme was carried out by the department of Economics; from 2009 – by the newly established department of Marketing.

There are national requirements for study programmes in terms of the total credits, study field credits, general (obligatory) subject credits and optional subjects. This part of the SER is being analysed in correspondence to these requirements and in relation to the study aim and planned learning outcomes. The structure of the curriculum and the component subjects are clearly explained and presented in the SER (in the main text and in the Annex 4).

The analysis of legal aspects of the Programme allows stating that the overall scope of studies is 120 ETCS credits, which equals to the maximal allowed number of credits. The subjects of the Programme are delivered in three semesters; the fourth semester is designated to writing Master Thesis (number of credits equals 30). The Master thesis may, or may not be related with the Research Papers No. 1, 2 and 3. Therefore the actual workload for students in the fourth semester might be very different, depending on the relation between these assignments in their individual cases. Also, this creates indistinctness in the assessment of the research papers: should they be evaluated according to the course descriptions of the Research Papers No. 1, 2 and 3; or the cumulative input into the final thesis development should be considered as well? In some sense, a student who well integrates his/her research papers into the Final Master Thesis may be evaluated twice for almost the same work, which would be not totally fair regarding the other students, who may develop separate studies for each of the assignments.

The Masters Thesis conforms to the formal methodological requirements for such work as published on the Vytautas Magnus University website. The stated aims of the thesis component are appropriate and essential as part of the overall learning process. The main issue that requires attention is related with the level of methodology development in the Final Masters Theses. The curriculum does not include a subject that would systematically deliver the research methodology, and students obviously lack this knowledge – it seems that knowledge acquired in course “Social and Marketing Research” in bachelor programme is insufficient at the level of Master studies. Certainly, the methodology may be well presented by the supervisors, working with students individually. There are no doubts about this process presence; just it seems that the Department of Marketing currently is dependent on a very limited number of supervisors, and their workload not necessarily allows doing this extensively.

Another aspect that might be considered in Master Thesis context is related with redirecting the topics and style of theses from being rather descriptive towards more analytical. Master thesis should include more elements of an academic research (research model development, hypotheses testing) with the sound overall methodological background. It would be very helpful to consider closer integration between research work of the supervisors and the topics of theses. There already are very good examples of the integrative work between the Master students and their supervisors, resulting into good publications; these examples should be encouraged and expanded. However, it is doubtful whether it can be significantly improved without increase of the number of supervisors: two professors (with a limited support of the third one) can not be equally well involved into large variety of thematic choices of the thesis papers. It would be very

advisable to have more diverse opinions in the grading process as well, since the grades of the research papers tend to be rather high (even when they are of the rather descriptive nature).

The subject structure of the Programme is described in the SER by defining three modules (page 12.). The list of subjects in the two first blocks well disclose marketing and international business aspects; again, the word “commerce” in the title of the Programme is rather misleading (it is not directly reflected in a title of any study subject). If the Programme Committee will somehow decide to keep the word “commerce” in the title, it would be absolutely necessary to develop/modify the study subjects in order to ensure their much closer linkage with the Programme title (for example – consider subjects like: International Sales Management; Export Management, Management of Electronic Commerce, etc.).

Certainly, the further development of this Programme may include many more directions. They may be explored by analysing similar programmes at international level. It should be prompted that typically the programmes are adjusted to the realities of globalisation, which would be valuable aspect of the development of this Programme as well.

In terms of the overall set of study courses, their selection and sequential flow is logical and fits the aim and intended outcomes of the Programme rather well. The only hesitations might be expressed regarding the elective courses of the first semester, especially – regarding the relevance of the course Insurance Business, which seems to be entirely alien to this Programme. Similar hesitation may be expressed about the course Processes of Public Procurement.

Instead, it would be very much advisable to consider subjects that would substantially cover issues of digital marketing and/or online sales. Together with relevant software, (SalesForce, Google Analytics, etc.) they would add a lot of additional strength to the Programme.

In the SER, there is an unfortunate language mistake in the title of one of the subjects, repeated throughout the whole document: *International Business Low* instead of *International Business Law*. It would be very advisable to correct this mistake in the document.

The subject descriptions are extensive and clear; they contain all the necessary information. The link between the Programme learning outcomes and the subject learning outcomes is shown in each subject description. Also, the teaching methods, assessment approach and assessment criteria are indicated for each subject learning outcome. Subject content is well described in almost all instances; the content is adequate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of a subject. Course descriptions also inform about the number of the main textbooks in the university library. However, this number in majority of cases equals to just one, which hardly can ensure efficient process of studies.

Another issue that requires additional discussion is related with the prerequisites for the studying specific subjects. Only the research papers and a couple of other courses have prerequisites from the other subjects of the Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* itself. Many others refer to the courses that assumingly have been delivered in the first level studies. However, such a set of prerequisites may be rather restrictive, especially – for the students from other universities.

It is stated in SER that each lecturer has to allocate time for individual consultations with the students, thus students can receive answers to their questions, discuss the topics for individual and group work, get advice on the final research paper, etc. This very well fits with the overall concept and style of a humanitarian university; however, the scope and format of this type work could be defined more precisely.

On the SER page 15, Paragraph 39, the text says: "...the students have to freely choose and study subjects of other study programmes". However, this somehow contradicts with the fact that studies have to follow the study plan, presented in the Annex 4. This is even less understandable, since among the weaknesses, it is stated: *although students have the opportunity to choose the subjects, however, these possibilities are limited due to limited number of students in groups*. Unfortunately, this means that the possibility of individual choice of elective subjects is almost not existing; the whole group of students have to take the same elective courses. At the same time, it is rather surprising that there is no visible effort of coordination of electives between the related study programmes. Students of *Marketing and International Commerce* Programme hopefully could have an option to take some electives from the *Advertising Management* study programme, and vice versa.

There is a double-degree agreement between Louvain School of Management, site Louvain-la-Neuve, Université catholique de Louvain (LSM-LLN) and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) regarding the analysed Programme. It includes curriculum of the double degree programme and credit transfer mechanism for students enrolled with VMU. The cooperation with the international partners includes numerous benefits for the staff and students, and can be only encouraged. However, this aspect is not further analysed in the report, since the analysis of the double-degree programme is not the subject of evaluation of the study Programme *Marketing and International Commerce*.

### **3. Staff**

The staff of the Programme includes 5 professors, 8 associated professors and one lecturer without PhD. This well corresponds to the legal requirements about the level of staff qualifications. The meeting with staff members very much confirmed their high qualifications; many staff members who deliver elective classes showed especially high levels of competence and very well described how they use various innovative concepts in the teaching process.

In many instances, the relation between delivered courses and lecturer's research interests, expressed in activities and publications, is rather close, except of the case of the professor who delivers the subject of International Law. His field of scholarship and research interests is rather away from the area of international law, and, consequently, the lecturer can not have publications related within the field of international law. Similarly, the lecturer of E-Business and Marketing expresses his interests in this field, but does not have either activities or publications on this subject. Also, there is somehow weaker relation between activities and the subject in case of lecturer who delivers Processes of Public Procurement; the lecturer of Pricing Strategies seems to be more concentrated on neuromarketing, rather than on pricing strategies. Though is understandable that lecturers are able to deliver some courses that are rather outside of their direct fields of interest, this gap should be reduced in order to aim for highest possible teaching standards.

All the staff in the Study Programme has sufficient pedagogical experience: 85,8% (12 of 14) of lecturers exceed 10 years. It is very positive that majority of lecturers have practical experience of working with companies or organisations of other types, that they are involved in consulting/expert activities. The teaching staff is well balanced according to the age groups: 21% of staff belong to the group up to 35 years, 50% - from 36 to 55 years, and 29 % - older than 55 years. These characteristics of the staff allow expecting successful continuation of the Programme at the high quality level.



However, the current pedagogical workload is not evenly or proportionally distributed among the staff members, especially – when considering the compulsory courses and other key elements of the Programme. The vast majority of the Master Theses is being supervised by just two lecturers; the same lecturers are heavily involved in the teaching activities and department/programme management activities. It may be positive that the strongest and the most experienced members of the Department of Marketing are largely sharing their experiences with the students; on the other hand – development of the other lecturers would enable reducing the disproportion in the workload among the core group of the staff.

Teaching staff is rather active in organising and participating in the domestic conferences, publishing papers in two journals of VMU; students are also largely involved into this process. Also, they participate in the international conference organised every two years together with the European Management Association.

However, the SER is very strongly stressing on the local, ‘in-house’ activities; to lesser extent – mentioning the publications in journals that are published in Lithuania; and even lower emphasis is put on participation in international conferences of marketing researchers and on the publishing abroad. It is well understandable argument that participation in conferences abroad is more costly, and can not be that frequent. Luckily, the field discussions with the staff disclosed that some staff members find ways to participate in them much more than it is presented in SER. However, the Department of Marketing staff (especially – younger) could significantly benefit from participation in high-level international marketing conferences, organised by the leading professional bodies (EMAC, AMS, AMA, etc.). This would allow not only developing research partnerships, but also make publishing in international journals more accessible and foster their professional carriers.

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

Students and lecturers of the Programme use the four main buildings of VMU which are concentrated in one area. Extensive renovation in recent years is stated to fulfil all the regulatory requirements.

The university offers over 70 study rooms for undergraduate and graduate studies. More than 50 out of 75 classes are equipped with all the necessary audio and video equipment (including wi-fi), which is available to both lecturing professors and students delivering group or individual projects. The design and nature of the teaching spaces is capable of supporting a varied range of teaching and learning approaches. Technical staff provides more specialised equipment on request from the collective University stock.

There is a stock of 68 computers and 10 laptops in the faculty; a new dedicated lab is state of the art. However, the notable feature in the computing resource area is the universal ownership of personal devices by students and the potential for a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) scheme is clear. This would allow capital spend to be switched to infrastructure, software licences and security while the cyclical renewal of the student population would ensure renewal and currency of the devices. As yet, there appears to be little structured and directed use of student devices in classroom situations.

The in house Virtual Learning Environment ‘First Class’ provides both a communication channel and a learning platform; there is also access to *Moodle*. Currently, there is a phase of moving from one system towards the other. The vision and positive thinking of the faculty senior leadership is commended by the Expert Team, but at departmental and programme level

there is a less of evidence of how these positive initiatives are translated into innovative content and delivery.

The Master programmes share 6 large classrooms for lectures (for 100-140 students), 4 small classrooms (for 12 – 25 students) for seminars, 1 computer classroom for 30 students and areas for group work. SER states that students of the Programme also are studying in the other main VMU buildings.

Each student of the Faculty can use one of the 24 modern computers, which are in the computer class, and library reading-rooms. In 2011 there were 6 additional computers installed in the open area, as an additional improvement of studying environment for group work. All the computers in the faculty are connected to the university intranet and fast Internet.

VMU has a library, which is modern and attractive. Students and academic staff have free access to about 30 scientific data bases that are uniformly available to students of all major universities in Lithuania. There is convenient possibility to access the resources via VPN.

General stock of books in marketing is quite broad; however, the stock of the main texts of majority of the courses of the Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* is very limited: in many instances the library has just one copy of the each title (see Annex 1).

The university uses several virtual learning environment and collaboration systems (Moodle, Live@VDU.FC). Additionally, three faculty servers provide students and teachers with free web space for on-line publishing of methodical materials.

The University has equipment for videoconferencing, which is extremely helpful in the context of increasing mobility of the students and growing academic partnerships.

In general, all the observed facts and provided information allows stating that facilities and material resources are sufficient for successful implementation of the Programme, and adequately fits the requirements of the students and lecturers.

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

Admission to the study Programme is organised according to the requirements stated in the Law on Higher Education as well as the University's Admission Rules, approved by the VMU Rector. Admission rules for Master programmes are published at VMU and department's websites. The university establishes admission quotas for each programme.

The admissions are distributed among state-funded (or funded by the EU Structural Aid project), university-funded and self-funded places. In all cases, admission decisions are made based on the applicant's position in the queue. Candidates to the Programme are required to have a university bachelor degree in the same or a close study programme. Graduates of other study areas or of the same area but non-university programmes cannot apply.

The number of admitted students during the period from 2008 remains stable (14-16), with the exception of 2011, when only 9 applicants have been admitted. The number of applications submitted for studies in the Programme is growing from 35 in 2008 to 40 in 2012 (Annex 5, Table 1). The Programme is successfully attracting applicants based on the VMU image and reputation; also, the Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* itself has a relatively long history of its successful implementation and is able generating positive references. These are the two most important factors that make the basis of the Programme competitiveness.

The average competitive score remains rather stable (just below 8.5, see Annex 5, Table 2). However, the competitive score of the best applicants was constantly growing (from 8.83 in 2008 to 9.483 in 2012; Annex 5, Table 2). Competition among candidates is growing (from 2.19 in 2008 to 2.67 in 2012, see Annex 5, Table 1). This shows that the Programme is continuously popular among candidates.

The popularity of the Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* is probably greatly assisted by the status, reputation and achievement of the graduates, many of which remain being close social partners of the Programme.

Student assessment procedures are rather clear; they reflect the style of a university of liberal arts and often largely include qualitative aspects of evaluation. The overall system of studies and assessment is encouraging rather informal communications between students and lecturers, aimed towards the best final result.

The analysis of grades shows that the mean achieved is very high; it was growing till 2011, and in 2012 it has decreased (among the students admitted in 2008 it was 8.75, in 2011 – 9.03, in 2012 – 8.52; Annex 5, Table 6). This extremely high result is two-fold: it is quite possible that the Programme attracts only the best, really capable and motivated students and therefore the teaching staff is able to achieve these extremely high results. However, it raises an issue whether the requirements for grading are really adequate.

The scope of analysed grades allows stating that grading is generally objective, i.e. the higher quality theses, research papers, etc., are evaluated higher than others. However, the distribution of grades in many instances is very thin; generally – just between 8 and 10, which is not necessarily reflecting the real spread in terms of the quality. The Department of Marketing and Programme Committee might consider this as an issue for improvement of the assessment system, especially – regarding the grading of the Master Theses.

Students' opinion survey (May 2012) showed that over 70% of the Programme's students rated the curriculum, study plan of the Programme, lists of the courses and exam sessions as above satisfactory level. Meeting with the current students and alumnae confirmed their positive opinion regarding the Programme.

Regarding the students attrition, the Paragraph 60 of SER informs that during the period 2008-2012, 65 students were admitted to Programme, 40 students successfully graduated, 22 students are currently studying, and 2 students are on academic leave. Despite the minor mistake in calculation (one person is missing), it is rather unusual to see the zero level of the student drop-out rate, especially – knowing that many of the students are working and studying at the same time.

Master studies are divided into 2 stages: during the first stage, compulsory and elective courses are being studied, term papers and research projects are provided; during the second stage (the last semester) the Final Master Thesis are being developed and defended.

The university allows the full-time students to study according to individual study schedule in cases determined by the Rector's order "Individual Study Schedule". However, is not fully clear from SER, how it works in conjunction with the study plan. The Expert Team was explained that such cases are extremely rare.

In the study Programme, the proportion of students' time is divided between contact hours, and independent (individual) work. The major part is devoted to individual work (about two-thirds). There is an interesting form of contact time with teachers – team work employing IT (15 hours). The time of these consultations is usually given for the preparation of the intended independent student group work. In the course of semester students are systematically contacting with the teacher with the help of IT (most often using e-mails, Facebook or Moodle).

All courses of 6 ECTS credits allow 15 hours of the student contact work for seminars in small groups (2-3 persons). Teaching methods that are used during lectures and seminars are adequate to the content of the courses and to the planned study outcomes.

VMU Regulation on Studies and other university documents define the procedures of studies, achievement evaluation, students' exams retake and possibilities to repeat the courses. The final grade integrates grades of the interim assignments and the final exam. It is strictly defined that the exam weight is 50% of the final grade. There are compulsory proportions: colloquium – 25-30% of the final grade, evaluations of all other assignments comprise 5–25% of the final grade.

It seems that such a strict regulation is imposed for the whole VMU. However, a number of lecturers comment that Master level subjects are rather different among themselves by their content, methods of assessment, etc., thus such a strict requirement is not always convenient.

The structure of the term paper cumulative grade is also very strictly divided into the evaluation of the term paper itself (80 %) and the defence (20 %).

As the Expert Team has been informed, graduate students are provided with opportunities to take part in academic and professional training seminars, conferences and public lectures organised both at the Department, Faculty and University, as well as by partner institutions. Students are encouraged to join and assist in research projects conducted by the teaching staff, participate in a conference of Master and Doctoral students. There are instances of successful joint publications in research journals.

Student support at the university includes:

- 1) assuring easily accessible and timely information on the study Programme (study plans, list of elective courses, timetables, consultation hours, etc.) in order to enable students to make choices and selections within the study Programme according to their individual needs and preferences;
- 2) recognising and evaluating their informally acquired competencies via different workshops, internships, and volunteer activities;
- 3) providing students with all other necessary support at the university, including scholarships and financial support.

The department helps integrating students that enrolled this Programme from other universities. Though there is no “introduction week” (like in the BA), or assigned tutors, all newcomers are familiarised with the study process by the appointed department member.

Students of the analysed Programme are granted all forms support provided at the university. In addition, they have possibilities to contact and resolve necessary issues directly with the teaching staff either face-to-face or via this Internet system.

The mobility of students is implemented via the LLP/Erasmus Exchange Programme and bilateral agreements with the universities in Europe. Students of Graduate Study Programme of *Marketing and International Commerce* are able to choose the University for their mobility from the list provided by International office with (64 foreign universities, and students of *Marketing and International Commerce* can choose from 18 of them). During the self-assessment period 9 Master students of the Programme were granted LLP/Erasmus or other exchange scholarships for their studies at partner institutions.

The number of incoming students is rather big and increasing (Annex 5 table 8). It is expected that the number of incoming students will grow in the future due to new courses delivered in English.

SER informs that one student of the Programme is currently participating in the double-degree programme with Louvain School of Management, site Louvain-la-Neuve, Université catholique de Louvain. This is an additional resource for the student mobility.

SER informs that students' academic honesty is ensured by the Regulations on Studies of the University. In case of students' cheating or other facts of dishonesty performed during the final and midterm exams, the teacher terminates the examination, records the final grade "1" and reports the fact to the Dean of the Faculty in written form. Teachers and students have the right to appeal to the University Academic Ethics Committee in case of the issues related to the academic honesty.

However, there is no information about the issue of possible plagiarism in research papers and in the final thesis paper. The discussion disclosed that such cases never occur, though it seems to be a bit too ideal.

SER informs that during the period of self-assessment 2008-2012, 67 students (40 admitted in 2008-2010, 27 admitted before 2008) have successfully completed their studies in *Marketing and International Commerce* Programme. It is forecasted that the number of students enrolled in and graduated from the Programme will remain stable.

Unfortunately, SER does not provide any specific information about the demand for the Programme graduates in this section; however, the meetings with the social partners and graduates confirm existence of such a demand.

Based on the survey, performed in May 2012, over 90 % of the respondents are employed; majority of them (61%) work as marketing and sales managers, communication managers or project managers. 29% of graduates were employed immediately after the graduation, 22% has been employed within a year after the graduation. This information does not disclose the whole picture, since part of the students has been employed during the process of their studies or even before the start of the studies.

## **6. Programme management**

The development and implementation of the study Programme are in accord with the published VMU Study Regulations, and are governed by the Lithuanian law on Science and Studies, the relevant orders of the Ministry of Education and Science and the University Regulations together

with the local Faculty Regulations. The Study Programme Committee, the Head of the Department of Marketing and the Deans Office and Faculty Board are responsible for decisions made in relation to the Programme *Marketing and International Commerce*.

Quality assessment procedures at VMU are defined rather strictly. Quality assessment is a continuous process that follows the Study Programme Update Policy. According to this policy, in the spring semester of every academic year the Study Programme Committee, on the basis of the data provided by the study quality assurance system and the research studies (both quantitative and qualitative evaluations by students), presents information to the department of Marketing and to the Dean of the faculty about the main drawbacks in the study Programme and proposes solutions for their elimination.

Study Programme Committee, together with the Department of Marketing, performs the self-analysis of the Study Programme at least once in three years (in the spring semester). They evaluate the aim of the Study Programme, Study Programme outcomes, composition, staff, material resources, study process and Study Programme management. Study Programme Committee, together with the teachers of the Programme, updates Study Programme and course descriptions at least once in three years (in the spring semester).

An important element of the Programme management and quality assurance is based on external relations with social partners and associated structures, such as European Management Association (<http://www.europeanmanagement.org>), Baltic Management Development association ([www.bmda.net](http://www.bmda.net)), Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Craft ([www.chamber.lt](http://www.chamber.lt)), Lithuanian Marketing Association ([www.marketingas.org](http://www.marketingas.org)). The Expert Team was impressed with the quality of personal and professional achievements of the graduates and social partners (they to some extent were overlapping). This stakeholder community is a valuable asset for the Programme continuation, and could be used even more in the context of the Programme management.

In terms of the overall management, the key issues regarding the Programme are resolved at the level of the Deans Office. The meeting with administration showed that the Deputy Dean was clearly seeing the place and value of the Programme, perfectly understanding its specifics and was ready to assist the Department of Marketing and the Programme Committee when required.

The managerial functions about the daily implementation of the Programme seem to be shared between the Study Programme Committee and the Department of Marketing. It seems that, despite the rather complicated formal set of involved bodies, lots of issues are resolved particularly at this level. It is noticeable that the Programme is closely supervised by the Head of the Study Programme Committee personally; the Head is on top of all the issues and aspects of the Programme implementation. Such an 'ownership' of the Programme allows all students and colleagues know the person who may advise on every programme-related issue, and this makes many processes go in a smooth way. On the other hand, more active participation of the other members of the Study Programme Committee would be very helpful. Especially beneficial would be the increase of role of the student representative and a social partner.

One of the issues that requires integration of managerial efforts of several levels is consideration about the possible synergy among the study programmes. Strong first level Programme of *Marketing Management* is a good basis for successful implementation of the Master level programmes in marketing field. The analysed Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* historically was the natural extension of marketing studies at the second level. Currently, there are two more graduate programmes offered in marketing field. Potentially, they may have a cannibalisation effect on the well established Programme of *Marketing and*

*International Commerce*; however, there is no evidence of this threat observed yet, and no damage in terms of applicants' interest is done yet. However, there is another type of the influence of the new programmes that is already quite obvious: the personnel of the Department of Marketing have received a significant additional workload, and the current resources of the key lecturers are used at the very limit. It would be very strongly advisable to consider two possibilities: (a) integrating some courses across the related graduate programmes, thus saving resources and giving more realistic opportunities to students to choose elective modules; (b) putting an additional effort on developing staff in the Department of Marketing, which would enable the younger colleagues to take some workload from the key lecturers.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Expert Team would strongly recommend changing the title of the Programme, in order to substitute the term “commerce” with subsequent changes in Programme aims and curriculum composition. If the direction of the Programme towards international commercial activities would be maintained, the subjects on international trade (including electronic) and sales management would be very much recommended.
2. Programme curriculum should be amended by a subject that allows students acquiring methodological skills of academic research. This would enable them to develop stronger methodological basis in the final theses and acquire better skills of scientific research in general.
3. The curriculum structure may be developed by adding additional compulsory subjects (as it is recommended above); and by replacing several rather irrelevant electives (especially – offered in the first semester) with the subjects that could be jointly delivered to at least two related graduate programmes. Students of *Marketing and International Commerce* Programme could have an option to take some electives from the Programme *Advertising Management*, and vice versa. This would allow achieving savings in teaching resources and create realistic possibilities for Master students to individually make choices of elective modules. Unfortunately, none of the current subjects substantially cover issues of digital marketing and/or online sales, thus the subjects of this type have to be amended to the schedule. Simultaneously, it should be considered providing students with software that is required for this purpose (SalesForce, Google Analytics, etc.).
4. Special attention should be made to the development of teaching staff that would be able to take at least some workload from the two key lecturers in the Department of Marketing, especially – in supervising Final Master Theses.
5. The Department of Marketing staff (especially – younger) could significantly benefit from participation in high-level international marketing conferences, organised by the leading professional bodies (EMAC, AMS, AMA, etc.). This would allow not only develop research partnerships, but also foster their professional carriers.



## IV. SUMMARY

### **The most positive aspects of the Programme:**

The second level study Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* has a relatively long history of its successful implementation. Positive references about the Programme, together with the overall reputation of Vytautas Magnus University, grant continuous attention of applicants and lead towards the stable continuation of the Programme.

The aim and learning outcomes are rather well defined, well publicly presented and are generally appropriate to the academic and professional requirements and the requirements of the labour market. The learning outcomes of the Programme are well related with the learning outcomes of the key modules of the Programme.

The existing material resources allow successful implementation of the Programme with the use of the current technologies and methods. The attention of administration allows continuous improvements of this aspect.

The Programme is implemented by the devoted personnel that creates democratic and friendly atmosphere between the lecturers and students, which well follows the concept of the University of Liberal Arts. The Programme *Marketing and International Commerce* has a clear element of 'ownership' – a person who is in charge of everything that is happening within the process of its implementation.

The Programme is supported by a number of graduates and social partners that may use their impressive achievements in the process of Programme development and in sharing their expertise with students in a number of different ways.

### **Issues that require attention:**

The Expert Team has the view that the marketing aspect of the Programme is represented stronger in the contents and curriculum than the aspect of the international commerce. International commerce seems to be partially substituted by international business operations, which is not totally in line with the title of the Programme. Based on this, there is a partial gap between the Programme title and its content.

Programme curriculum lacks a module that would allow students developing methodological skills of the research. This does not allow all students to develop sound methodologies for their research papers and of the Final Master Theses; also (more importantly) – it results into the gap in skills of the graduates.

Curriculum generally needs stronger stress on the international commercial activities (if the Programme title and concept will remain unchanged). Additional attention to digital aspect also would be very advantageous.

The pedagogical workload is not evenly distributed among the staff members, especially – when considering the compulsory courses and other key elements of the Programme. The vast majority of the Master Theses is being supervised by just two lecturers; the same lecturers are heavily involved in the teaching activities and department/programme management activities.

Grading system is objective, but grades in many instances are distributed rather narrowly, between 8 and 10. This does not necessarily indicate something negative, just this type of distribution requires attention and monitoring.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Marketing and International Commerce* (state code – 621N50003) at Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by fields of assessment.*

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

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

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

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

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

Grupės vadovas:  
Team Leader:

Paul O'Sullivan

Grupės nariai:  
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Darius Bagdžiūnas

Justinas Žalys

<...>

## V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto studijų programa *Marketingas ir tarptautinė komercija* (valstybinis kodas – 621N50003) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	3
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>18</b>

\* 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

### Teigiami studijų programos aspektai

Antrosios pakopos studijų programa *Marketingas ir tarptautinė komercija* pasižymi sąlyginai ilga sėkmingo vykdymo istorija. Teigiami atsiliepimai apie studijų programą kartu su apskritai gera Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto reputacija reiškia, kad studijų programa nuolat susilaukia stojančiųjų dėmesio ir tai leidžia stabiliai vykdyti studijų programą.

Studijų programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai yra gana gerai apibrėžti, gerai pristatomi viešai ir apskritai tinkami pagal akademinčius ir profesinius reikalavimus bei darbo rinkos poreikius. Programos studijų rezultatai yra tinkamai susieti su pagrindinių studijų programos modulių studijų rezultatais.

Turimi materialieji ištekliai leidžia sėkmingai vykdyti studijų programą panaudojant naujausias technologijas ir metodus. Vadovybės dėmesys leidžia nuolat gerinti šį aspektą.

Studijų programą vykdo atsidavęs personalas, kuris sukuria demokratišką ir draugišką atmosferą tarp lektorių ir studentų, kas atitinka laisvųjų menų universiteto koncepciją. Studijų programa *Marketingas ir tarptautinė komercija* turi aiškų „savininkystės“ elementą – asmenį, kuris yra atsakingas už viską, kas vyksta studijų programos vykdymo metu.

Studijų programą vykdyti padeda absolventai ir socialiniai partneriai, kurie yra pasirengę pritaikyti savo įspūdingus pasiekimus plėtojant studijų programą, ir įvairiausiais būdais pasidalyti savo žiniomis su studentais.

### Svarstylini klausimai

Ekspertų grupė laikosi nuomonės, kad studijų programos turinyje ir sandaroje marketingo aspektas yra atspindėtas geriau nei tarptautinės komercijos. Panašu, kad tarptautinę komerciją iš dalies pakeičia tarptautinio verslo operacijos, kas nevisiškai atitinka studijų programos pavadinimą. Tai tarp studijų programos pavadinimo ir jos turinio yra dalinė spraga.

Studijų programos turinyje trūksta modulio, kuris leistų studentams įgyti metodinių mokėjimų, kaip atlikti mokslinį tyrimą. Jo stoka neleidžia visiems studentams susipažinti su pagrįsta mokslinio darbo ir baigiamojo magistro darbo rašymo metodologija, be to (o tai yra dar svarbiau) leidžia atsirasti absolventų mokėjimų spragoms.

Studijų turinyje apskritai reikia stipriau akcentuoti tarptautinę komercinę veiklą (jei nebus keičiamas studijų programos pavadinimas ir koncepcija). Labai naudingas būtų ir papildomas dėmesys skaitmeniniam aspektui.

Pedagoginio darbo krūvis nėra vienodai paskirstytas tarp personalo narių ir ypač privalomųjų studijų dalykų ir kitų pagrindinių studijų programos elementų srityse. Didžiąją dalį magistro baigiamųjų darbų vadovauja vos du lektoriai – tie patys lektoriai itin daug dėsto ir dalyvauja Katedros / studijų programos valdymo veikloje.

Vertinimo sistema yra objektyvi, tačiau baigiamųjų darbų pažymių diapazonas yra pakankamai siauras – nuo 8 iki 10. Tai nebūtinai rodo kažką neigiamo, tiesiog tokį pasiskirstymą būtina stebėti.

### III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Ekspertų grupė itin rekomenduoja keisti studijų programos pavadinimą siekiant pakeisti sąvoką „komercija“ atsižvelgiant į paskesnius studijų programos tikslų ir studijų sandaros pakeitimus. Jei bus norima išlaikyti studijų programos tarptautinės komercijos kryptį, tuomet itin rekomenduojama būtų įtraukti tarptautinės prekybos (įskaitant elektroninę) ir pardavimų vadybos studijų dalykus.

2. Studijų turinį reikėtų koreguoti įtraukiant studijų dalyką, kuris leistų studentams įgyti akademinio tyrimo metodinių mokėjimų. Tai leistų studentams įgyti stipresnius metodinius pagrindus baigiamajam darbui ir apskritai įgyti geresnius mokslinio tyrimo atlikimo mokėjimus.

3. Studijų struktūrą galima plėtoti toliau pridėdant papildomus privalomuosius studijų dalykus (kaip rekomenduojama aukščiau) ir pakeičiant kelis gana neaktualių laisvai pasirenkamuosius studijų dalykus (ypač dėstomus pirmajame semestre) studijų dalykais, kuriuos būtų galima bendrai dėstyti bent dviejose susijusiose antrosios pakopos studijų programose. *Marketingo ir tarptautinės komercijos* studijų programos studentai turėtų turėti galimybę rinktis kai kuriuos laisvai pasirenkamuosius studijų dalykus iš *Reklamos vadybos* studijų programos ir atvirkščiai. Tai leistų taupyti metodinius išteklius ir sukurti realias galimybes magistrantūros studijų programos studentams savarankiškai pasirinkti laisvai pasirenkamuosius modulius. Deja, nei viename iš šiuo metu dėstomų studijų dalykų pakankamai išsamiai nenagrinėjamos skaitmeninio marketingo ir / arba internetinių pardavimų temos, todėl šio tipo studijų dalykus reikėtų pakoreguoti studijų turinyje. Tuo pat metu reikėtų apsvaistyti galimybę aprūpinti studentus šiam tikslui reikiama programine įranga (pvz., *SalesForce*, *Google Analytics* ir pan.).

4. Ypatingas dėmesys turėtų būti skiriamas dėstytojų profesiniam tobulėjimui, kad šie būtų pasirengę perimti bent dalį darbo krūvio nuo dviejų pagrindinių Marketingo katedros dėstytojų ir ypač dalį vadovavimo baigiamiesiems magistro darbams.

5. Marketingo katedros personalui (ypač jaunesniam) būtų labai naudinga dalyvauti aukšto lygio marketingo konferencijose, kurias organizuoja svarbiausios profesinės organizacijos (EMAC, AMS, AMA ir pan.). Tai leistų ne tik bendradarbiauti mokslinių tyrimų srityje, bet ir būtų naudinga personalo profesinei karjerai.

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