



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Šiaulių universiteto  
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS "SOCIALINIS DARBAS IR SOCIALINĖ  
REABILITACIJA"**  
(valstybinis kodas – 6181JX002)  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT  
OF "SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL REHABILITATION"**  
(state code -6181JX002)  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Šiauliai University

**Review' team:**

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Socialinis darbas ir socialinė rehabilitacija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	6181JX002
Studijų sritis (studijų krypčių grupė)*	Socialiniai mokslai ( <i>Socialiniai mokslai</i> )*
Studijų kryptis	Socialinis darbas
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Pirma
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Socialinio darbo bakalauras (socialinių mokslų bakalauras)*
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2014-01-21

\* skliaustuose nurodomi nauji duomenys, kurie pasikeitė nuo 2017 m. sausio 1 d. įsigaliojus Studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose sąrašui bei Kvalifikacinių laipsnių sąrangai.

## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Social work and social rehabilitation</i>
State code	6181JX002
Study area (Group of study field)*	Social sciences ( <i>Social sciences</i> )*
Study field	Social work
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	First (Bachelor)
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time – 4 years
Volume of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of social work (Bachelor of social sciences)*,
Date of registration of the study programme	2014-01-21

\* in brackets new data provided, valid from 1 January, 2017 after List of study fields and groups of study fields Framework of qualification degrees came into force.

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

## CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Background of the evaluation process.....	4
1.2. General.....	4
1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information.....	4
1.4. The Review Team.....	5
<b>II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	5
2.2. Curriculum design .....	11
2.3. Teaching staff .....	13
2.4. Facilities and learning resources .....	20
2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment.....	21
2.6. Programme management .....	23
2.7. Examples of excellence .....	25
<b>III. RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>IV. SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1. 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 by Order No 1-01-162 of December, 20, 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 following main stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team to the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

Based on 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 is evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area is evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

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

### ***1.2. General***

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC.

### ***1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information***

The study Programme is being implemented in Šiauliai University which is a state higher education institution, a public entity acting as a public institution and having a special status established by *the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania* and other legislation. The Programme implementation is ensured by the Department of Health and Social Welfare of the Faculty in cooperation with Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), Latvia and other departments of the Faculty and divisions of the University (Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Art, Faculty of Technologies, Physical and Biomedical Sciences, Centre of E. Studies). (SER p. 1).

The Self-Assessment team was formed to analyse the implementation of the programme and to prepare the self-evaluation report.

The present review has been carried out under the guidelines and procedures of SKVC. Conducting evaluation of the Study Programme, the External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of December, 20, 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The initial stage included the preparation of the self-assessment report by the University. This was read and commented on by the team of experts, after which the team visited the University on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017. During the visit, the evaluation team had the opportunity to discuss the Programme with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni and employers. The evaluators visited the library, offices, teaching space and facilities related to the programme.

After the visit, the expert group held a meeting for discussing and amending the content of the evaluation report to represent the opinion of the whole group.

#### ***1.4. The Review Team***

The review team was assembled according to the *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2017.

1. **Mr. Damien Courtney (team leader)**, *Fellow Emeritus CIT, Former Head of Faculty, Business and Humanities, Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland.*
2. **Prof. dr. Skaidrite Alma Gutmane**, *Professor, Rector, Latvian Christian Academy, Latvia.*
3. **Doc. dr. Marju Medar**, *Associate Professor, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia.*
4. **Mr. Saulius Davainis**, *Head of Social Activity Department, Republican Hospital of Kaunas, Lithuania.*
5. **Ms. Evelina Kripaitė**, *Student, Sociology and Criminology Study Programme, Vilnius University, Lithuania.*

Technologies (RTA), Latvia has been developed and is implemented in the Faculty of Education

Sciences and Social Welfare, which is the only faculty in Lithuania with deep traditions and academic potential in the area of social and special education as well as in the areas of social, psychopedagogical, special and special educational needs of people with disabilities and at risk of social exclusion (SER p. 1).

The Study programme *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* (Bachelor degree studies) provides a basic university education in the field of Social Work that complies with European standards and prepares specialists in social work having good professional and general cultural competence who, by integrating interdisciplinary knowledge and intercultural experience, will be able to evaluate the needs of a person, group and society in a complex manner, and to provide social rehabilitation services following the principles of professional ethics and after reflectively assessing their own professional activities (SER p. 2). The study programme *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* is designed for full-time studies (4 years). The learning outcomes reflect the statement in the self- evaluation report (SER p.2-7).

The Joint Bachelor study programme is associated with the training of social workers who are able to provide social rehabilitation and a range of services using a European integration model. Specialization in social rehabilitation facilitates the development and training of social work specialists in Lithuania and Latvia.

What follows are comments on the evaluation of the programme aims and learning outcomes according to a number of criteria.

**The aims of the programme and the learning outcomes are based on the Dublin first cycle Descriptor, the European Qualification Framework and the Lithuanian National Qualification Framework, academic and professional requirements, and are linked to the Lithuanian state strategies and labour market needs.** The Study Programme has been prepared taking account of changes in modern society and relevant development trends based on the needs for social workers in the Latgale region of Lithuania. The aim of the Programme is formulated on the basis of the Description of Study Fields of Social Work, the expertise of researchers in the Department, and close partnership between the Department and scientists of RTA in the research areas of social rehabilitation, disability and social assistance. The Programme aim is formulated by combining knowledge of abilities required for social workers' professional activities with various groups of clients as well as for conducting research,

knowledge of professional abilities required for the provision of social assistance, services of social rehabilitation, and knowledge of social and personal competences. This knowledge and related activities is demonstrated in the evaluation report (SER 2-7) and by the members of administration, teaching staff, alumni and partners during the visit. During the evaluation meetings it was confirmed that the goals of the Social Work study Programme is to prepare specialists who can professionally react to social problems of recent years in Lithuania. Having a regional labour market focus, the special value of the Programme is its internationalization. Its innovative approach to the profession's identity is a positive.

**The Study Programme *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* matches the aim and learning outcomes of the study Programme and specifies knowledge and awareness of prospective specialists, areas of and conditions for the application of special and general abilities. The Programme learning outcomes are in compliance with the *Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework Level 6* which accords with the *Dublin Descriptors of Study Cycles*, and corresponds to the qualification of the study field i.e. - *Bachelor degree in social work and the qualification of social worker* (SER p. 6). This knowledge and related activities are demonstrated in the evaluation report and by the members of the administration, teaching staff, alumni and partners during the visit. **The aim and learning outcomes of the *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* Study Programme are in compliance with the type and cycle of studies, and with the level of qualification.****

**A clear correlation between the Programme, its outcomes and requirements for study programmes (related to descriptions of study cycles and Dublin Descriptors) are set out in the description of the study field.** Graduates are awarded the Bachelor degree in Social Work, in the study field of social work within the group of study fields of social sciences, as well as the qualification of social worker. Learning outcomes are clearly defined in terms of interdisciplinary knowledge and research in social work practice. Special professional skills of the future specialist are realized in terms of social work and social rehabilitation services. All this information is presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 6) and confirmed during the visit.

**Correlation between the Programme title, learning outcomes, content and qualification awarded.** Correlation between learning outcomes and the content of the definition provided in the Classification is also observed in terms of the creation of a social network and interinstitutional cooperation. The Programme title, aim and learning outcomes indicate the

nature of the activities of future specialists as well as the skills they acquire, i.e. *the social worker, having mastered personal and social skills, interdisciplinary knowledge and intercultural experience acquired through academic mobility and substantiated by relevant legal documents and market needs, will provide empowering social assistance and social rehabilitation services for an individual, group and community* (SER p. 7). This approach was explained at the meeting of administration and teaching staff during the visit.

**The aim of the programme and the learning outcomes relate to Lithuanian state strategies, labour market needs and demand for social workers in the Latgale region.** Different analyses show the great need for social specialists, who are able to work with disabled people. The need for social services is estimated based on the demographic, economic and social situation which exists in the cities and society. Socio-economic challenges are a precondition of social risk amongst youth, adolescents and young families, and correlates with a high demand for social support. There are many communities in both countries who live at risk of social exclusion (in Lithuania 25%-30%; in Latvia 21-22.5%; in the Latgale region – 43.7% (SER p. 4).

**The need for social workers with specific knowledge to work with disabled people, and the demand for education of social workers in the Latgale region is evident.** Information about the need for social workers is presented in the valuation report and confirmed during the evaluation meetings with administration, teachers, alumni and social partners. **The compliance of the Programme aim and intended learning outcomes with academic and professional requirements, as well as social and labour market demands, is evident.**

**The ŠU Study Programme *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* meets the Description of Procedures for the Development of the Professional Competence of Social Workers.** The aim of the study Programme is the preparation and professional development of social workers, who are able to act independently to empower a person, group or society. The integration of achievement levels into a study process constitutes a significant challenge. During the study process the latest research-based theories of social work are focused on the ability to identify and fulfil the psychosocial needs of a person, group, or community, thereby creating a precondition for the proper field of practice orientation and the adequate response to society's expectations (SER p. 6). This knowledge and related activities are demonstrated in the evaluation report and by the members of teaching staff, students, alumni and partners during the visit.



Social Work and Rehabilitation as professions have different ideological and methodological bases, which are not described in the evaluation report or explained during the meetings with administration and teaching staff.

Students need to be better informed about the latest EU issues and the work of civil society organizations active at EU level. It is important that the European Union's Social Agenda for social inclusion and social cohesion is included in the study Programme. Categories such as solidarity, social cohesion, subsidiarity, inclusion, youth unemployment, mutuality, equal participation as well as disability issues are now addressed at the EU level by definite services which focus on removing barriers to full and equal participation by everyone in the labour market and in society at large. This enables the 80 million persons with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights on an equal basis, supported by the EU member states and the framework for national integration strategies.

**The Programme aims and learning outcomes are in compliance of with the mission, aims and strategy of the higher education institution.** The aim of the Programme complies with the main provisions of *Šiauliai University Strategy 2015–2020* which is related to the preparation of highly qualified specialists, by responding to demand in the region and country for quality specialists training. Compliance of the Programme with market needs is based on the aim and outcomes of studies by focusing on the latest research-based theories of social work to identify and fulfil the psychosocial needs of a person, group, or community, thereby creating a precondition for the proper field of practice orientation and the adequate response to society's expectations. Professional and personal growth is realized through personal results and preconditions for proper orientation in the context of labour market needs (SER p.6). During the evaluation meetings with administration, teachers, students, alumni and social partners it was confirmed that the aim and learning outcomes of the *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* study Programme, to prepare specialists who can professionally react to social problems of recent years in Lithuania and the Latgale region, were realised.

**Programme goals and objectives are consistent with Šiauliai University mission, goals and strategy.** Objectives stated in the ŠU strategy regarding improvement in the study process comply with the Programme aim and outcomes in terms both of meeting the market needs and increasing the intercultural dimension of studies. The objective of increasing an international aspect of the studies is closely related to the Programme outcomes which are aimed at the

development of intercultural competence in an interdisciplinary team, and in various cultural environments, by ensuring continuous student international mobility within the framework of the Programme (SER p. 6). **The mission, operational objectives and strategy of the higher education institution are related to the Social Work Study Programme and understood by all stakeholders.**

**Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes described in the evaluation report correspond to the mission, operational objectives and to the strategy of the higher education institution.** Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are clearly described in the report. **Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are linked to academic and professional requirements.** Internal procedures in the Faculty are established, implemented and coordinated by the Faculty Council and the Dean's Office. The Faculty divisions perform functions and maintain hierarchical relationships set out in the University normative documents which are based on principles of a democratic culture. The Faculty structure allows the planning, organization, control and implementation of the Study Programme as well as seeking the intended learning outcomes. Improving the study Programme is achieved through collaboration with the Study Programme Committee. These documents and related activities are presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 1; Annexes 1, 2.1., 2.2., 2.3., 2.4., 2.5.), and expressed during meetings and discussions with the administration and teaching staff members, social partners and alumni (Meetings with teaching staff, administrations, students, social partners and alumni).

**Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are publicly accessible.** The aim and learning outcomes of the Programme are publicly available in the University websites. The Department teachers, students and the Head of the Studies Marketing Group pass on information about the Programme, its curriculum, aim and outcomes when visiting schools of Šiauliai Region and other regions, participating in Career Days organized in schools and the University, meeting pupils in public spaces (e.g. "Scientific Cafe"), exhibitions and annual study fairs. General information about the Programme is provided in specialised publications such as "Kur stoti", and informal social networks such as Facebook. Additional information about the Programme is provided in the Faculty and the Department by face-to-face meetings and by phone. Students get acquainted with the Programme aim and learning outcomes during *Information Week* and the first lecture, when a course unit, its learning outcomes and correlation with the Programme learning outcomes are introduced. Students have open access to the university library (SR p. 3-4;

Meetings with teaching staff, administrations, students and alumni). Clarification is required of the level of learning outcomes intended to be achieved in the Programme on the completion of each course unit. Social stakeholder including central and local government officials should be involved in this process, in order to correlate the aim and learning outcomes of the Programme for the integrity and the greater good of society.

**The teachers together with the students of the Study Programme disseminate information on the Study Programme**, its content, goal and learning outcomes to teachers and students. The evaluation report and evaluation meetings with teachers and students confirmed that students are welcome to discuss different academic issues with the department study Programme administration and with the Study Programme Committee. The most popular form of consultation is a meeting and direct communication between a teacher and a student. The Moodle system is available for students and used by teachers. A student centered approach is used by teachers (SER p. 11-12; Meetings with teaching staff, administrations, students and alumni).

## *2.2. Curriculum design*

**The Programme structure** is in line with Lithuanian higher education legislative requirements. The Programme has been developed within the Lithuanian qualifications' framework and conforms fully with the European Bologna process requirements. The study content and the awarded qualification correspond to the title of the study Programme. Practical training corresponds to and is closely related in its theory content. Scientific research work of the academic staff is closely related to the study courses they teach. The connection of the scientific research work with the study Programme is evident.

**Subjects of study (modules):** A methodology of empowerment is central to the Curriculum design. Historically, the strength of the Programme was the rehabilitation of disabled people – the Programme was specialized and focused on disabilities. Curriculum design contains an historical insight into working with disabled people, and the insight is combined with an innovative approach and search for course subjects designed to educate specialists in social work more generically to fulfill the needs of the region. The very positive aspect of the Curriculum design is its interdisciplinary approach. In the context of the criteria being evaluated the study

Programme is at a good level and meets all requirements. The performance is characterized by a high degree of strength including a historical background of working with disabled people and an innovative interdisciplinary approach in the Curriculum design.

**The subject contents and study methods:** a methodology of empowerment which has been developed historically throughout the Curriculum design enables the Programme to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

**The scope of the programme:** it is clearly didactic, taking account of the regional needs, the needs of students who will work in the region and aimed at the empowerment of students and graduates. Problem solving skills are developed through internships. “In-service learning” is evaluated as very positive by the review team.

It is accepted that the case analysis is integrated into several course subjects. We recommend that it should be provided as a separate course with reference to different client groups. The development of the internship is also evaluated as very positive.

**The content of the programme** corresponds to an innovative, interdisciplinary approach. We recommend that the latest European Social Agenda aspects with regard to innovative developments in European Social Work should be included in the Curriculum. The aim of the study Programme should be focused on Social Work with Disabled People rather than on the general Social Worker.

As students work in international teams a methodological basis needs to be included in each course in order to understand different cultural contexts and engage in mobility like their teachers. The study Programme should be based on interdisciplinary paradigms of working with disabled persons and with voluntary organizations, and include such subjects as social philosophy, psychology, spirituality and social work ethics.

Students need to know and use more modern theoretical approaches such as reflective Social Work. The theoretical part of the study programme is strengthened by Caritative social work theory & practice, as an interdisciplinary approach and as a means of empowerment, which is fundamental. It is recommended that *Caritative Social Work* should be one of the main study subjects rather than an optional one.

Implementing a Joint Programme is challenging and problematic e.g. compatibility between two states, use of new study methods, language issues, translation, travel costs and student mobility.

Students need more knowledge and subject-specific skills e.g. for working with elderly people, often in nursing homes.

### **2.3. Teaching staff**

**The teaching staff members from the assessed study programme meet the requirements provided for in legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and in the University requirements. Teachers' qualifications are compliant with intended learning outcomes. Teachers' participation in scientific research complies with their scientific research areas.** The Joint Bachelor study Programme *Social Work and Social Rehabilitation* is implemented by 27 highly qualified professionals who meet the requirements of Lithuanian and Latvian legislation relating to the implementation of 1st cycle study programmes in the field of social work. 19 (68%) teachers have a PhD degree, 9 (32%) teachers have a Masters' degree; 4 (14%) professors, 11 (39%) associate professors, 12 (43%) lecturers and 1 (4%) assistant lecturer are involved in the Programme in both higher education institutions. Subjects in the study field (for students who entered ŠU) are taught by 23 teachers (including 7 teachers of Rezekne Academy of Technologies), including 15 (65%) PhDs and 8 (35%) teachers with Masters' degrees. The Programme is implemented by 4 (25%) professors, 5 (31%) associate professors and 7 (44%) lecturers from ŠU, and 3 (43%) associate professors and 4 (57%) lecturers from RTA who have different, but relevant teaching, research and practical experience and appropriate qualifications for the achievement of learning outcomes and the quality assurance of study courses. General course units and the basic ones in the study field are implemented by teachers who have at least a Masters' degree or a corresponding degree or qualification in the field of studies or science of the course unit SER p. 13).

The Programme teachers are experts in the field of subjects they are teaching, and the area of their scientific interests comply with these subjects. Historical background of teaching Social Pedagogy in ŠU (80% staff have experience in special pedagogy) is oriented towards education sciences and social welfare, in research and in studies. There is good cooperation with other departments and topics in the social sciences. Peer reviewed publications include Journals of

Šiuliai University: “Social Welfare Interdisciplinary Approach” and Baltic Journal of Special Education “Specialusis Ugdymas”. The defended doctoral theses confirm the quality and progression in the teachers’ qualifications (SER p. 14). **Whilst the teachers from both universities have different experiences of pedagogical, research and practical social work, they have the required qualifications for the achievement of the learning outcomes and the quality assurance of the studies. The study subjects are implemented by the teachers meeting the qualification requirements for the positions.**

**The cohort of academic staff is sufficient. The ratio between the academic staff and students is appropriate, which gives the opportunity for teachers to deal with students individually and supports the reaching of learning outcomes.** The ratio between teachers and students is regulated by the Senate which annually approves procedures to account for teachers and researchers' work. The ratio of the Programme teachers and students during the period under review was 1 to 11. Groups of students are not big; therefore, the academic needs of all students are addressed and the quality of studies is ensured during various forms of theoretical lectures and seminars, consultation and organized practices. All this information is presented in the evaluation report (SER p. 14; Meeting with administration and teaching staff) and reported by administration staff and teachers during the evaluation meetings.

**The creation of conditions necessary for teachers’ professional development.** The necessary conditions are created for the professional development of ŠU and RTA teachers. The necessary attention is paid to academic staff’s professional development that is related to both the quality parameters of the Programme implementation and the dynamics of the teacher’s professional career. Teachers experience professional development in several ways: by teaching, research and other activities, which are focused on community or other groups. Improvement priorities for the Programme teachers’ pedagogical competences include the use of innovative study methods, assessment of students’ achievements, the improvement of the study Programme in relation to student feedback, the links of learning outcomes with assessment methods, the use of virtual environments, and teachers’ internships at research institutions related to the improvement of social work competences. Teachers' professional development is implemented in complex ways by mandatory evaluation every 5 years. A self-evaluation report consists of: 1) supervision; 2) development and sharing of experience; 3) publication of scientific articles; 4) participation in scientific conferences, internships, seminars and training; 5) teaching; 6) expert activities;

7) participation in project activities; 8) supervision of doctoral students. All these requirements and activities are presented in the evaluation report and annexes, and reported during the evaluation meetings with teachers and administration. All the candidates who take the position of a teacher are appointed in accordance with a publicly announced competition (SER p. 15; Meeting with administration and teaching staff).

The University system of professional development and motivation encourages an increasing number of participants in international exchange programmes and close cooperation with universities abroad to raise the quality of studies and the qualifications of the teaching staff.

**All the teachers implementing the Study Programme have experience of scientific research in the field of social sciences or professional activity in different research projects. Teachers' scientific competence is demonstrated in prepared scientific publications and research activities.** During the latter 3 years, the Programme teachers from both higher education institutions made 26 scientific presentations on the subject of social work and social rehabilitation, and related to the course units at international scientific conferences abroad including Finland, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Poland and Russia. During the period under review, ŠU teachers made 55 presentations at scientific conferences organized in Lithuania while RTA teachers made 13 presentations in Latvia. On the subject of social work and social rehabilitation, ŠU teachers published 54 articles in Lithuanian and foreign periodic peer-reviewed scientific publications, 2 research studies, 4 teaching aids, 6 manuals, 1 project study and summaries of presentations in proceedings of various conferences. Teachers of the partner institution, RTA published 24 articles, 1 monograph, 2 teaching aids and 1 manual on the subject of social work. ŠU teachers' professional/subject-specific activity and the internationality of teaching and qualification upgrades are displayed through their participation in international and national internships, seminars, training and social work camps. Teachers developed their competences in the areas of social work, methodology of scientific research, application of innovative study methods, and the English language by visiting the USA, Canada, Great Britain, France, Malta, Germany, Austria, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Italy, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the Ukraine (SER p. 15; ; Meeting with administration and teaching staff).

During the period under review, five ŠU teachers and five RTA teachers gave lectures to higher education institutions in Ireland, Belgium, Turkey, Portugal, Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania as part of the Erasmus programme. 21 teachers from universities of the USA,

Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Latvia gave lectures to students of the Programme on the topic of Social Work through the programme of academic mobility (Erasmus). Lectures on other topics of Social Welfare were given by 23 teachers from universities in Great Britain, Finland, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Israel, Brazil, Taiwan, the USA and Latvia. Teachers' participation in mobility programmes, and the preparation and implementation of course units in the study process ensure the international nature of studies, the updating of subject-specific knowledge, higher quality of studies, innovation and quality of studies management. All this information is presented in the evaluation report and confirmed by the administration staff and teachers during the evaluation meetings (SER p. 16; Meeting with administration and teaching staff).

**The Department conducts applied scientific research, as well as implementing national and international projects.** The teachers of both higher education institutions actively participate in international project activities and conduct research in the area of their scientific interests (Project SOCPEDKOM; Project LIEPA; Project POZCOPING). During the reviewed period, ŠU teachers prepared and implemented 8 scientific and exchange projects (7 international and 1 national): GRUNDTVIG, MODPART, SOCNET, LIEPA, Lets' study!, *Designing a Model Geared towards Participation of People and Groups at Social Risk in the Labour Market* (LLIV-223). For scientific achievements and the inclusion of persons with special needs in the activities, the project *Creation of the Ideal Model of Vocational Counselling for Children and Youth with Special Educational Needs* was celebrated in Poland and Lithuania as the best implemented project during 7 years. ŠU and RTA also implement joint scientific research on the topic of social work. ŠU teachers actively participate in social activities: they are members of various associations or social work groups (the President and members of the Association of Lithuanian Social Work Schools, the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), the Lithuanian Scientific Society, the Association of School of Social Researcher, Lithuanian Art Therapy, and the Working Group of Social Services Plan Preparation of Šiauliai City Municipality. One is a member of Šiauliai City Municipality Working Group in the Area of Public Safety, Social Affairs and Health/Preparation of Strategic Development Plan for the Year 2015–2024) (SER p. 16; Meeting with administration and teaching staff).

Teachers are also members of various scientific organisations, editorial boards of scientific journals (*Social Welfare: Interdisciplinary Approach, Multicultural Studies, Social Health*), scientific committees of international conferences (*SOCIETY. INTEGRATION. EDUCATION*,



*Education Areas: Challenges and Possibilities, New Approaches to Improving Health Care Education: Today and Tomorrow*). The Programme teachers participate in international and national scientific seminars, internships and scientific conferences. **The teaching and research experience of academic staff is sufficient for the attainment of the learning outcomes. They are actively involved in research activity, develop their own professional qualifications and disseminate their research results. The researchers of the Department review doctoral dissertations, are supervisors for doctoral students, review scientific articles and are members of various associations or professional groups and editorial boards of scientific journals. They are organizers and participants of international events and actively participate in the activities of scientific, methodological and administrative events.** All this information about teachers qualifications and research activities is presented in the evaluation report and its annexes (SER p. 16; Annexes 3, 4). During the evaluation meeting the teaching staff showed, that they are closely connected with their teaching area and are well qualified. (Meeting with administration and teaching staff).

**The qualifications of the academic staff of the Programme are ensured by applying the University systems of competition and assessment.** Priorities for the development of pedagogical/teaching competences of the Programme teachers are the application of innovative study methods, assessment of student achievements, organization of feedback and use of virtual environments. During the period under review, the Programme teachers participated in international and national scientific seminars, internships, conferences, and delivered lectures in various foreign countries. These forms of qualification upgrading comply with the fields of teachers' scientific interests and are related to the content of teaching subjects, thus ensuring continuous professional development (SER p 15).

**The evaluation report (with annexes 3, 4) and meetings during the visit show, that teachers working in the Study Programme have extensive pedagogical, research and practical experience, and are able to convey high-quality knowledge and experience to students, as well as establishing their connections to social work activity.** During the evaluation meetings the teachers, students and alumni confirmed that the MOODLE system is used in teaching, which provides good opportunities for students to learn. All the study material is available in Moodle. Teachers are good supervisors and give students individual consultation and advice. All open and private Skype meetings are available for students. Videoconference facilities are used for teaching and learning (SER p. 12, 21).

**The academic work of the Programme planned for teachers is in accordance with the principles of the pedagogical workload of SU academic and research staff approved by the Senate.** The Programme teacher's workload is composed of four parts: 1) *contact* work with students 2) scientific work 3) activities of publicizing: publicizing, popularizing, introducing academic and other activities to society; 4) upgrading of qualifications and organizational activity. The volume of teaching hours for one tenure comprises 36 hours per week and 1584 hours per academic year. The volume for one tenure of pedagogical work comprises not more than 976 hours per academic year, of which not more than 720 – the hours of contact work with students and not less than 256 – the hours of non-contact work. Not less than 448 hours are allocated for research activity per academic year; up to 160 hours per academic year are allocated for upgrading of qualifications, organizational and publicizing activities (an equal distribution for research and studies is recommended). During the period under analysis the workload of full-time teachers fluctuated between 750-800 hours. This conforms to the *Description* requirements. Currently, the increased number of occupied positions is determined by the stable number of MA students and the growing number of foreign students undertaking Bachelor studies. Teachers' professional development is discussed at meetings of the Department: teachers share their experience gained from study trips, seminars and conferences. In addition, annual reports summarising teachers' working experience are compiled by the teachers and the Department at the end of each year. The social work competences of the Programme teachers form part of their curriculum vitae. **The academic workload of teachers is flexible and gives them the possibility of development their own academic qualifications in the personal research area** (SER p. 14).

The Programme teachers are continuously looking for innovative methods to use in the study process in order to enhance the quality of studies. Innovation methodology is an integral part of the system used by the ŠU academic staff. They are regularly driving and managing innovations. Innovation methodologies keep changing, positively, and continue to impact on how to deal with the modernization of Social Work education. They search for new instruments and new social technologies to provide students with a clear validation of the Social Work profession. The review team positively endorses the involvement of students in the authentication of the Social Work profession and its creative and innovative development.

Teachers actively participate in social activities, cooperate closely with social partners, observe and analyse innovation in social policy and social work technologies, thus ensuring continuous improvement of their knowledge and the conveyance of the latest information to students.

**The evaluation report and meetings underline the need for a number of improvements.**

80% staff have experience in social pedagogy which they should be encouraged to apply in their social work activities.

There is a need to enhance the quality and international character of the studies, to improve the composition of staff cooperation with foreign universities. This should be expanded and visiting teachers should be encouraged to give lectures on social work not only through the Erasmus exchange programme but arising from cooperation agreements signed with other universities. Higher quality and efficiency of international cooperation would be ensured by developing teachers' communicative skills in the English language during internships and courses.

Internationalization should be improved as regards visiting professors from other countries who can provide an enrichment of Caritative social work in rehabilitation theory and practice. There should be more visiting teachers from other countries with experience of the elderly and of social rehabilitation.

Specialists with an interdisciplinary approach to research should be invited for its practical addition to the student Curriculum. Teachers actively participate in research and project activities, and conduct extensive international applied research; therefore, they should be encouraged to prepare more high-quality articles for publishing in citation reviewed science databases.

Programme teachers should be encouraged to participate in short-term expanded internships in institutions and national authorities designed to consider social work developments and trends related to study programmes of social work and social rehabilitation.

In addition, more active participation of teachers in public activities and associations of social work should be encouraged.

#### *2.4. Facilities and learning resources*

**Teachers and students have good facilities and equipment that is appropriate for the attainment of the learning outcomes of the programme.** Social Work and Social Rehabilitation study Programme implementation is ensured by the Department of Health and Social Welfare which is part of the Faculty of Education Science and Social Welfare.

**Students have good learning conditions, suitable classrooms, laboratories and practice places.** Students can use 16 venues which are suitable for the study process and has such equipment as computers with software and visual technologies (multimedia). It should be noted, however, that distance learning through Moodle isn't available widely enough. Some venues are available with audio systems, interactive boards, portable sets of TV and video equipment. Facilities and furniture comply with the health and safety requirements.

**Students with disabilities receive social support from the university.** Faculty of Education Science and Social Welfare facilities are customized for students with special needs. There is a lift, adjusted WCs, elevators, special furniture, magnifying equipment for the visual impaired, compensatory computer control and navigation equipment.

The Faculty of Education Science and Social Welfare has established the Centre of Study Resources, the Centre of Distance Studies, the Centre of Information Recourses for Students with Special Needs, the Laboratory for Professional Rehabilitation and other training centers for developing new social work and social rehabilitation practical and continuing research in cooperation with social partners

A multisensory room equipped with light, music, motion and other equipment was established to implement positive stress management strategies.

**Library is equipped according to the required standard. The quantity, quality and relevance of reading materials match the needs of students.** The Šiauliai University Library is an important resource for the implementation of the Social Work and Social Rehabilitation study Programme. It is sufficiently stocked with Lithuanian and English scientific literature, methodological publications, articles and relevant course-books. There are over 400 seats for

visitors, 170 computerized workstations, free Wi-Fi, subscribed Lithuanian and foreign databases, scientific journals and other material.

It was stated during the meeting that Rezekne Academy of Technologies (Latvia), as an Higher education institution implementing the study Programme, has a library with a modern reading room with computerised workstations and many books, periodicals and serial publications that are digitalized and can be accessed easily. **Students are trained in ‘learning to learn’ techniques.**

Šiauliai University has a dormitory which is very close. Rēzekne Academy of Technologies also has a dormitory and a guest house which visiting teachers and students can use during their visits.

The social partners ensure that students have opportunities to practice in different social work fields such as public institutions and NGOs.

An inclusive society is the basis for interdisciplinarity and integrating multicultural and different elements of the study Programme. Good opportunities exist to practice real social work in specific situations such as in the Ukraine war zone.

The Review Team didn't have the opportunity to visit any of Rezekne Academy of Technologies' facilities and learning resources in Latvia.

### ***2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment***

**Entrance requirements are well-founded, consistent and transparent.** This Joint Programme with Rēzekne Academy of Technology takes 4 years of full-time studies. It should be available in the Lithuanian and English languages but most of the students and stakeholders informed the review team that joint subjects are mostly in Russian. Students receive a Joint Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a social worker qualification. Competitive admissions score structure: 0.4 History; 0.2 Mathematics or Information Technologies; 0.2 Anything that does not match other subjects and 0.2 Lithuanian language and literature. The review team recommend that the methodology for developing the Joint Programme should be improved.

**Organization of the study process ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes.** Students' knowledge is easily applied in practice because the fieldwork is organized well. Students have the opportunity to learn in-service. They have 21 hours of practice based on voluntary work.

**Students are encouraged to take part in scientific, artistic or applied sciences activities.** Research related activity is used in a practical context. Students are encouraged to take part in research with their teachers. It is important to invite professors from abroad who can teach new Social Science research methods and how Europeans use up to date interdisciplinary research. Students already use research methods to solve problems in local municipalities. It should be done, however, by using more up-to-date interdisciplinary methods in the Social Sciences.

**Students are provided conditions to take part in mobility programmes.** Students have opportunities to take part in ERASMUS programmes and have to go to Latvia for field practice.

**The higher education institution ensures proper academic and social support.** 50% of study fees are paid by the University. Students have the opportunity to get scholarships, loans, social support and support from Lithuanians living abroad.

**The system of assessing students in achieving the learning outcomes is clear, public and appropriate.** Students noted that they like reflections, discussions, practice diaries and round table discussions. Teachers and students meet to talk and plan before their practice for best outcomes. After the practice they reflect on what could have been improved.

**Professional activities of the majority of graduates correspond to the expectations of the programme staff and employers.** Employers and social partners noted that students coming into practice had more knowledge and less practical skills. Students learn skills while in practice. Students come into organizations hesitantly but after a while, they articulated their arguments more boldly. Some students gained employment with Šiauliai district municipality. Students are proficient in dealing with paper work and documents, and have a good understanding of this. There is a consensus that their knowledge of the law is sufficient.

**The programme corresponds to the state's economic, social and cultural future development needs.** The Programme meets the needs of the region, client groups, municipalities

and social services. Stakeholders reported that ŠU provides a good generic and specialist education for Social Workers. Members of the probation service stated that they would like to participate in the decision-making process regarding the Programme development and operation.

Working in two different countries is an innovative, learning process for each side. Students get two different diplomas: Lithuanian or Latvian; and a European diploma.

The Joint Bachelor study programme is associated with the training of social workers who are able to provide social rehabilitation and a range of services using a European integration model. Specialization in social rehabilitation facilitates the development and training of social work specialists in Lithuania and Latvia.

In the opinion of students the wide approach in the study Programme improves their skills. Students like the teaching methods – distance learning, discussions, seminars, project work and knowledge of applying for funding. The innovative approach to Social Work includes research, inter-disciplinarity and integrated practice, working in social networks and case studies. The teaching and learning atmosphere is good, students have the opportunity to travel and to learn a language and have contacts with other nationalities.

**Fair learning environment is ensured.** Academic support includes access to the *Academic Information System* and possibilities to study according to an individual study plan.

The university has online journals, online databases, a ŠU Moodle platform and EBSCO.

**Students are provided opportunities to make complaints and lodge appeals in accordance with clear, public and transparent procedures.** Students demonstrated a very positive attitude towards the University staff and administration. Their views are considered when planning and delivering the study Programme. Their complaints are always taken into account and result in positive decisions and outcomes.

## ***2.6. Programme management***

**The responsibilities for decision making regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme are clearly defined.** The principles of quality assurance at University and Faculty level are ensured by the development of an internal studies quality

management system at Šiauliai University, which emphasizes the implementation of quality values in the context of the cultural dialogue throughout the study process. The aim of the Programme is to prepare social workers with a professional, general cultural competence and interdisciplinary knowledge. In addition, intercultural experience is associated with the general principles of the University's quality assurance. It was confirmed to the review team that the Programme is implemented in such a way as to ensure mobility possibilities for academic staff and students. The self-evaluation report indicates, that responsibility for managing the Programme is distributed at all levels – i.e. University, Faculty, Department and Study Programme Committee. Teachers and students are included too in the management of the Programme.

**Internal quality assurance mechanisms are clear, effective and updated regularly.** At University level, the Senate and the Rectorate make decisions regarding study quality assurance issues.

The main decisions relating to the development of the Programme are decided by the Faculty which ensures that the Programme is in line with trends in science and studies. It also coordinates, selects and certifies the content of study subjects. The Programme would benefit from greater involvement by the social partners in formal management functions and curriculum design.

The Department of Health and Social Welfare, as stated in the self-evaluation report is the main decision maker in Programme management. The Department is responsible for the Programme quality assurance and other aspects of implementation – i.e. the formation of scientific and pedagogic staff, the management, preparation and defense of the final thesis, coordination and organization of practice placements. It is important that the quality of the Programme at the Department/Programme level is ensured in both higher education institutions – the Joint Study Programme Committee, the Department of Health and Social Welfare at Šiauliai University and the Faculty of Education, Languages and Design at Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (Latvia).

The Programme management has a strong regional and local context, and it demonstrates a good sense of functionality, as well good engagement with policy makers and service providers.

**Feedback from the study programme stakeholders is collected and analysed regularly. Feedback is used to improve the programme. All stakeholders** (teachers, students, social



partners and alumni) **are involved in appropriate aspects of programme management and administration.** Authors of the study course descriptors prepare and make corrections in the Programme academic subjects. Teachers are responsible for the preparation of lectures and for ensuring that the Programme aims are implemented.

There is a good level quality control system. Department has a Quality Month as part of the study Programme, where partners and students are expected to participate in meetings and develop ideas on how to improve the it. Feedback is collected regularly from students. The Study Programme Committee has two meetings per year on the topic of learning outcomes, where social partners, government members and students participate. They have videoconference meetings too.

Students are responsible for their individual work and individual study results. They give feedback about the study process. After graduation students are interviewed to ascertain their opinions about the aim, effectiveness and other aspects of the Programme. The results are used to improve the Programme.

It is also noted that the recommendations from the expert team in 2013 were used in the internal review and development of the Programme.

**The University promotes the study programme through the public ŠU website.**

**It is disappointing that the Review Team did not have the opportunity during the visit to engage in person or through social media with any of the management, teaching staff or social partners of RTA. Such an encounter would have enhanced the process and may have informed it better of the quality of the relationship between MRU and RTA.**

## **2.7.Examples of Excellence**

1. Initiative to provide Joint Bachelor study Programme of Social Work and Social Rehabilitation with Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Latvia. Collaborative teaching staff and international students have many benefits for each university.
2. The specialization in Social Rehabilitation is what characterizes the Programme's educational uniqueness. Its interdisciplinary approach is commendable. The Programme

is updated and focused on integrating European trends towards the education of specialists in Social Rehabilitation primarily to work with persons with a disability. Historically, SU's background in teaching Social Pedagogy is important and relevant.

3. Problem solving skills are developed through internships, "in-service" learning is developed well.
4. The Study Programme and Library, in particular, have excellent facilities and equipment which contribute to the attainment of the learning outcomes. Students with a disability are accommodated very well.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As a Joint International Programme internationalization needs to be enhanced by inviting more visiting professors from other countries. Teachers' communications' skills in English should also be improved.
2. We recommend the development of a more clearly defined Study Programme methodology, aimed at a deeper improvement of the content with regard to Social Work and Rehabilitation, derived from its historical background.
3. We recommend including in the Curriculum the latest aspects of the European Social Agenda related to the development of European Social Work.
4. European scientific challenges require the joint involvement of researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds. Such a team of researchers would help to develop and promote a strong interdisciplinary methodology for training truly interdisciplinary specialists in Social Work with respect to critical skills and competences, and enhance teachers' understanding of it.
5. Consideration should be given to making *Caritative Social Work* one of the main study subjects and "Case Studies" developed as a separate course with reference to different client groups. The inclusion of a "Basics of Medicine" course and a practical course on "Systems of Rehabilitation" should be integrated in the Programme.

#### **IV. SUMMARY**

This innovative Joint Study Programme “Social Work and Social Rehabilitation” has been developed together with Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Latvia. It offers a Bachelor of Social Work degree and Social Worker professional qualification. It is worth 240 ECTS and is available for full-time studies during 4 years.

The Study Programme’s aims and learning outcomes are formulated on the basis of the Description of Study Fields of Social Work and on the requirements for the professional activities of Social Workers. Aims and learning outcomes of the Study Programme are in compliance with the type and cycle of studies, qualification level, Profession classification and Descriptor. They are related to the labour market needs of the region and of Lithuania.

The Programme goals and content are established by Siauliai University and fully understood by its stakeholders. The University has good level of quality control system in place including a Study Programme “quality month” when all stakeholders develop innovative ideas for the improvement of the Study Programme. The development of a more clearly defined Study Programme methodology is proposed, aimed at a deeper improvement of the content with regard to Social Work and Rehabilitation, derived from its historical background.

The latest aspects of the European Union’s Social Agenda should be further considered in the future development of the Study Programme. Such categories as: Solidarity, Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Mutuality, Disability and Equal Participation need to be more deeply understood by students. They should be better informed about European issues and the work of civil society organizations, which are active at the European level.

Students should be involved in interdisciplinary research teams as part of their training. A stronger interdisciplinary methodology to train truly interdisciplinary specialists in Social Work should be developed. The Study Programme should prioritize its interdisciplinary paradigm to work successfully with disabled people.

The scope of the Programme has a didactic understanding with regional needs taken into account. Problem solving skills are developed through internships and in-service learning is positive.

Teachers are highly motivated who actively participate in scientific research and publications. Teachers are members of various scientific organizations and editorial boards who participate in local and international conferences. Academic staff qualifications are sufficient to achieve the Programme aims and objectives.

The Study process and assistance to enhance student performance is done in a good way. The application of quality assurance principles ensures an effective internal quality management system.

The Study Programme supports teacher and student mobility, and collaboration in the form of meetings and conferences with other universities. This increases the Programme quality and has the added value of joint publications with Rezekne University (Latvia).

The Study Programme enjoys excellent facilities and equipment, including the Library, which contribute to the attainment of the learning outcomes. Students with a disability are accommodated very well.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Social Work and Social Rehabilitation (state code 6181JX002/618L50001) at Siauliai 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	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	4
	<b>Total:</b>	20

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

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

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

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

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