



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Lietuvos edukologijos universiteto
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *GEOGRAFIJOS EDUKOLOGIJA*
(*valstybinis kodas - 6211MX007, 621X20037*)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE OF GEOGRAPHY* (*state code -*
***6211MX007, 621X20037*)**
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences

Experts' team:

1. **Prof. Maris Klavins (team leader)** *academic,*
2. **Prof. Andrew Cooper,** *academic,*
3. **Prof. Dr. Adam Weintrit,** *academic,*
4. **Dr. Christiane Weber,** *academic,*
5. **Mr. Sakalas Gorodeckis,** *social partner,*
6. **Mr. Dionyzas Šlimas,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator -

Miss Lina Malaiškaitė

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Geografijos edukologija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	6211MX007, 621X20037
Studijų sritis	Fiziniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Gamtinė geografija
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	Ugdymo mokslų magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Educational Science of Geography</i>
State code	6211MX007, 621X20037
Study area	Physical sciences
Study field	Physical Geography
Type of the study programme	University Studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Education Sciences
Date of registration of the study programme	

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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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 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. General

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Annual workload calculation for LEU teachers
2.	Performance indicators of the program staff (<i>h-index</i>)

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

The second cycle university study programme Geography Education (hereinafter – the Study

Programme) has been implemented according to the parallel model formed in Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (hereinafter – LEU, the University) and confers the Master’s degree in Education. It was launched in 2015. The Study Programme Geography Education has been realised by the Department of Geography and Tourism (hereinafter – the Department) of the Faculty of Science and Technology (hereinafter – the Faculty) at LEU. This Study Programme Geography Education is a logical continuation of the Bachelor Study Programme of Geography, which is also being implemented in the same Department. The trained teacher of geography is oriented towards work in senior forms of gymnasiums, in colleges, vocational schools, institutions of non-formal education, state, private and public organisations.

The Faculty of Nature and Technology consists of 4 departments, the Nature Research Institute and other divisions: the Greenhouse, CISCO Academy, ECDL Testing Centre. There are 12 professors, 30 associate professors and 26 lecturers. The Study Programme Geography Education is being implemented by several divisions of the University and their activities are coordinated by the Directorate for Academic Affairs.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *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 *27 October, 2017*.

- 1. Prof. Maris Klavins (team leader)**, *Professor of Department of Environmental Science, University of Latvia, Latvia;*
- 2. Prof. Andrew Cooper**, *Professor of Coastal studies, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Ulster, Ireland;*
- 3. Prof. Dr. Adam Weintrit**, *Professor of the Faculty of Navigation, Gdynia Maritime University, Poland;*
- 4. Dr. Christiane Weber**, *Senior researcher at CNRS DRCE, France;*
- 5. Mr. Sakalas Gorodeckis**, *board member of Geography and the Geographical Society, Lithuania.*
- 6. Mr. Dionyzas Šlimas**, *student of Kaunas University of Technology of Chemical engineering study programme.*

Evaluation coordinator – Miss Lina Malaiškaitė

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

As declared in the SAR is: “to train highly qualified educators of geography, who have acquired knowledge and abilities of education process organisation and scientific research methodology, who are able to creatively organise geography education, to develop programmes and projects of geography education, to apply new educational technologies, to independently plan and conduct research, to assume responsibility for research results and their dissemination in gymnasiums or other institutions of formal and non-formal education, to critically evaluate experience in geography education accumulated in Lithuania and other countries”. The aim of the study program is ambitious, however, it does not give adequate consideration to: a) the needs of the society in the graduates of the program, as well as expectations of possible students; b) experience of similar study programs elsewhere; c) the situation in the labour market and competences needed, as expressed by opinions of the social partners.

There are five stated learning outcomes of the study program, and every LO covers several aspects, however, looking at geography mainly from a human geography perspective. It could be suggested to the Study Programme Committee to go through the intended LO and ensure that all the students taking the study program will be able to achieve the intended LO. The expert team finds the broad scope of the program challenging in respect to the need to gain competences in a broad range of geography. The expert team thereby think that the university should make a program that reflects: a) recent trends in the teacher training; b) the needs of the labour market; c) trends in the geography education at master level; and d) the competence of the teaching staff, to made the quality of the program higher.

Regular revision of learning outcomes is recommended to consider the recent trends in the needs of geographical knowledge as well as recent trends of development in use of information technologies.

2.2. Curriculum design

Generally the study programme structure is in line with the Lithuanian legislative requirements for teacher training at MSc level. The programme is grounded on the European, Lithuanian legal acts and LEU documents that regulate studies, assure study quality and establish requirements for the acquired qualification. Consistent with the study subject layout, the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. The volume of the Study Programme equals the maximum number of credits (120 credits) recommended by legal acts. This creates

better conditions for achievement of the goals of the Study Programme, which envisage competences of significantly higher level compared to those achieved in the first cycle studies and contributes to high quality preparation of an educational researcher, who is ready to work in the sphere of education. Subjects of study (modules) are taught in a consistent manner starting from most general issues, but deepening the analysis of study subjects afterwards. Subjects and topics are not repeated. The content of subjects (modules) corresponds to the type and cycle of studies – Master studies. Expected learning outcomes are transparent and clearly reflect the programme content and ensure the distinctiveness of the Master programme in Education (Educational Science of Geography). The content of subjects (modules) and study methods enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, supporting development of study process management skills as well as understanding of the use of innovative study and teaching methods in schools. The descriptions of study subjects show a close link between the learning outcomes of the Study Programme and the learning outcomes of the study subjects that are in line with the former, the links between study and assessment methods are ensured and practically implemented in the process of studies. The logic of the programme, relationship between the learning outcomes of the programme, learning outcomes of subjects is clear. The programme is good, but a few things could be changed to make it even excellent. One weakness is the balance between study courses dedicated to geography in respect to study courses in pedagogy: Not all aspects of contemporary geography are adequately reflected in the study program, for example, climate change issues, migration problems and others. The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve the learning outcomes. The curriculum looks attractive for students, whose expectations are matched to the actuality, career requirements for teachers and who are therefore motivated to pursue their studies. The structure of the programme should be maintained in line with the principle of keeping a balance between theory and practice as well as considering experience from similar programs elsewhere in EU (curricula of teacher training programs elsewhere). In the curriculum there is a lack of information about pedagogical practice in primary/secondary schools. This was confirmed during meetings with the program administration and students. This kind of practice is not mentioned at all.

The expert team cannot agree with the statement given in the comments on the expert evaluation that the “... necessity to organise additional practical training in placements has no point”. Unfortunately, this statement is evidently in contradiction with the concept of Master studies in teacher training and the need to do research on school work practices. As a matter of fact the necessity to offer the whole range of capacities for students and professional in order to be

inserted in active society will lead to more and more practical periods assuming that they provide a wide range of possibilities not only on education.

2.3. Teaching staff

This program is taught by an appropriate number of staff (10 teachers) who are suitably qualified and meet the legal requirements. There is a high level of experience among the Professors, Associate Professors and Lecturers. None has less than 13 years experience and more than half the staff have over 20 years experience. Staff are suitably qualified to deliver the learning outcomes. This was confirmed by alumni who praised the staff's familiarity with modern teaching practice and found the staff to be very helpful. While there was a desire for more international input to the course, teaching in an international language was acknowledged to be a problem for many students.

Many staff have taken part in training programmes internationally, and have made good use of facilities such as Erasmus and Socrates programmes as well as national support mechanisms. There have been good levels of uptake of these opportunities among staff. The research activity of the staff is heavily biased toward pedagogical research and this is consistent with the content of the course. The research performance of the staff is quite low if judged by *h* index. There is, however, some activity in specific fields of geography including publications and participation in conferences, nationally and internationally. Most staff publications are in national journals in the Lithuanian language and many are in the field of pedagogy. It is recommended that further activities should concentrate on research in disciplines related to the study program (geography) and should aim for more international publications. Staff have also published several school text books. There are incentives to encourage research activity and support for participation in Erasmus and conference attendance.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

The MSc program is managed within the Faculty of Natural Science, Mathematics and Technology, which consists of four departments and two other units. The Faculty occupies a part of modern 3 storey building in the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences campus at the Studentų street area. The owner of MSc programme is the Department of Geography and Tourism. Almost all lectures and practical classes are held in the faculty building. The auditoriums and classes used for this programme are adequate for purpose and equipped with modern multimedia.

The premises rooms and classes are connected by wifi to the Lithuanian academic network, however, its use is not very intensive. Notebooks and computers are available for students, who

can also use their own laptop. The licensing of computers software including GIS and statistical software is available for students and is used in the study process. In general, the premises for studies are adequate in both size and quality.

As study program is focusing on application in education institutions, so the researches and practices mostly are held in cooperation with social partners. Students' internships are related to their actual work as teachers.

The study literature is mainly in the Lithuanian language, the programme's principal language. The University library subscribes to the range of full-text databases, where students can find the information needed for their studies and research. Recently the University library has switched to the electronical catalogues and online maintenance. The relative scarcity of learning resources on geography and educology intersection, is partially compensated by bought publications in other languages. Part of specific literature available for students is provided by lecturers from department collections, especially maps and atlases. In general, the teaching materials in geography and educology cover the programme needs.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Entrance criteria are transparent and clear, but the expert team suggests some changes to provide the possibility for graduates of geography, environmental and other study programs to apply for studies. For example, a graduate of social science without any additional courses can pursue a Master's directly, but a graduate of geography must take additional courses. The organization of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of expected learning outcomes. Independent learning and practice feature strongly in the programme. The expert team recommend that more hours would be included on practical training. The importance of practice placements (internships, apprenticeships) is crucial; students acquire valuable practical experience, improve their research skills and establish contacts with future employers. Graduates demonstrate their acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills in their progression to further studies and professional employment; the great majority of graduates meet or exceed the programme provider's expectations.

The delivery of most study courses is in Lithuanian, but many information sources are in English, Russian and Polish. Despite the undoubted difficulties this currently presents for some students, the student view is that the positives outweigh the negatives and they strongly support the development in the programme. The assessment system is clear, well understood by students

and has some innovative features, for example, use of statistics for data analysis, use of Internet resources, GIS in study process, management of students project works. Student expressed a wish, that they would like to have international lectures, not necessarily in English. Students improvement on English language is necessary for further study program improvement. Future career prospects are also enhanced. Students receive clear and timely information about delivery of the programme and the assessing of their performance. Students understand the methods and procedures involved and have opportunities to discuss their own progress with the academic staff.

The system of resolving areas of dispute by students and the provision of opportunities to repeat an academic subject appears to be functioning well. Procedures for preparing and defending the final thesis are clear and rigorous. Assessment prompted no complaints from students.

The expert team got the HEI opinion, however, we still believe that the above recommendations are totally relevant, but it seems that to face the current global change issues and the various challenges the society has to face with, that a strong basis in geographical science (meaning physical and social geography) is more than mandatory. The LUES MA SP have to ensure the expected level of knowledge necessary to cope with continuous changes that appear in the discipline. Discussing the issue on possibilities to enrol students with a differing background we suggest the program administration to leave the comfort zone and consider what to do, to attract an adequate number of students. Another important aspect is related to the subject specific compliance of the MSc program applicants. Geography is interdisciplinary science, combining social science and natural science perspectives. In the expert team evaluation it is clearly stated that the attempt to concentrate on the “...basic pedagogical, psychological and didactic theoretical-practical training...” to some extent is happening at the cost of professional training in geography.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated. University, department and SP committee are really supportive to this Study program. They consider that this SP is really needed for the future of geography teachers in Lithuania. The information about the program is publicly available, but in addition the information is disseminated using close cooperation with Lithuanian Geography Teachers Association.

Programme implementation is well documented and information about the follow up is collected regularly. The outcomes of internal and external evaluations as explained by students and social partners are used for the improvement of the programme. For this reason a large amount of pedagogical lectures are given in MA whereas deeper knowledge in physical and human geography is provided in the BA.

The stakeholders are involved in education and so present the needs regularly to the SP committee in order to fit with the abilities needed in school.

As is has been mentioned by a social partner, the MA SP is considered as offering the possibility to improve the professional project (didactic, methodology), a question that might be interesting to think about is the possibility to open e-learning capacities to more numerous teachers through a lifelong learning project with specific didactic and methodological modules. This could provide an improvement to the teachers who have not the possibility to run a complete MA SP or who desire just to attend some of the modules.

Expert team got the HEI opinion, however we still believe that the main problem of the mentioned study program is related to the ridiculously low number of students participating in the study process. Experts fully agree that the program is functioning according to all possible regulations adopted in Lithuania, however it has just a few students. In existing approach and with the visible attitudes of the study program administration, the running of the program is not sustainable in a long-term perspective. On the other hand, it is not the expert team's responsibility to think how to attract students, but first and direct responsibility of the study program management. However neither during the meetings with the program administration, nor during meetings with program staff did we get an impression indicating clarity, of how to solve this problem. Also in comment to expert evaluation, this question is not addressed, thus indicating major threats for the running program in long term perspective, as formal compliance with legal regulations is put as a major argument.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS*

1. The set limitations in respect to student admission (point 5.1, in SAR) exclude possibly prospective students of the study program, for example, geography, cartography and other bachelor study program graduates. Thus admission requirements can be identified as a major barrier to advance the geography teacher training at master level. This situation should be changed.
2. Regular renewal of the study program's learning outcomes could significantly improve the popularity of the study program and can contribute to the improvement of the educational quality.
3. Continuous revision of the programme's aims and outcomes and the curriculum to promote the strengthening of a scientific productivity. The curriculum should be extended at least on the field of didactic practice at schools. These are prerequisites if the implementation of all other recommendations is to be effective.
4. Review the curriculum so as to follow trends in the labour market and incorporate study courses supporting development of transferable skills that will enhance the employability of graduates from the programme.
5. Formalize a placement period clearly in the agreement document and include this period in the study program as professional practice period. This will reinforce the effort of the student and might be a positive point in a CV.
6. Diversify the social partners (presently as social partners are considered teachers, school directors, education NGO's etc) considering also state authorities, experts from GIS field and others.

IV. SUMMARY

The aim of the study program is to prepare highly qualified educators of geography, who have acquired knowledge and abilities of education process organisation and scientific research basics. The stated learning outcomes cover several aspects mainly from human geography and pedagogics perspective. At updating of the study program curricula and reformulating the learning outcomes it is suggested to consider the recent trends in the teacher training, needs of labour market, trends in the geography education at master level to make the quality of the provided education higher. This program is taught by a qualified staff being able to reach the learning outcomes. However the research activity of the staff is heavily biased toward pedagogical research. Most staff publications are in national journals and many are in the field of pedagogy, so direction of further activities could concentrate on research towards disciplines related to the study program (geography) as well as aims to reach international publication standards. The MSc program is managed by the Faculty of Natural Science, Mathematics and Technology. The auditoriums and classes used for this programme are in shape and equipped by modern multimedia. Entrance criteria are transparent and clear, but expert team suggest to change them providing possibility for graduates of geogrpahy, environmental and other study programs to apply for studies. The organization of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of expected learning outcomes. Independent learning and practice feature strongly in the programme. The expert team recommend that more hours would be included as practical training. The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated. University, department and SP committee are really supportive to this Study program. Programme implementation is well documented and information about the follow up is collected regularly. The stakeholders are involved in the development of the study program as well as in the teaching process.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Educational Science of Geography* (state code - 6211MX007, 621X20037) at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences 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	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	2
	Total:	15

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

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

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

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

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Maris Klavins
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Prof. Andrew Cooper
	Prof. Dr. Adam Weintrit
	Dr. Christiane Weber
	Mr. Sakalas Gorodeckis
	Mr. Dionyzas Šlimas