



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION



OVERVIEW REPORT FOR DENTISTRY (Odontology) STUDY FIELD

2023 year of the evaluation

Prepared by the chairperson

Dr. Kevin John Davey

I. INTRODUCTION

The overview is based on the external quality evaluation of the *Dentistry (Odontology)* study field in the following Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): *Lithuanian University of Health Sciences* and *Vilnius University*.

The external evaluation was organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with recommendations were prepared for integrated field studies and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the *Dentistry (Odontology)* field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, expert panel have come to a decision to give **positive** evaluation to the *Lithuanian University of Health Sciences integrated studies* and *Vilnius University integrated studies*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field and integrated studies for 7 years.

II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

Overall observations by the expert panel regarding the most positive aspects of the study field in Lithuanian HEIs as well as areas in need of improvement. The analysis covers all 7 evaluation areas.

3.1. Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum

Both the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU) and Vilnius University (VU) Odontology programmes have well-structured and developed curricula which are benchmarked to both national and European requirements. The learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and there is evidence of constructive alignment of the learning outcomes with the teaching and assessments. There was clear evidence that changes have been made to the curricula following feedback from students and other stakeholders to ensure the teaching is current to the needs of the students and the labour market. In both programmes, there is further scope to develop Interprofessional Education (IPE) between the odontology students and other dental care professional students (e.g. dental hygiene and dental technology students), especially in the clinical context. This would enhance teamworking and leadership skills, which are important in modern clinical practice. There is also scope in both programmes to better integrate the clinical teaching of the Lithuanian and English (International) programmes to aid patient-student communication and to promote cultural understanding.

3.2. Links between science (art) and studies

It was evident that there is a strong commitment to research-driven education in both programmes and there are good opportunities for students to get directly involved in research

activities. There were no significant issues raised by the panel in this evaluation field. However, there is scope to increase student participation in research activities throughout the curricula, not just for the final thesis.

It was evident that VU has a long-term tradition of interdisciplinary research and has a wide network of international collaborations. The new Faculty of Medicine Science Centre provides further opportunities for dental research for staff and students, however, care should be taken to ensure interdisciplinary research collaborations continue. Regarding LMSU, the OF should continue to develop their interdisciplinary and international research collaborations.

3.3. Student admission and support

The student admission processes for both programmes are robust and transparent, and are readily available online. It is evident that both programmes continue to attract very high calibre students. There are also clear recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures, for formal and informal qualifications, which allow admission of students from a broad educational background.

Both institutions have a broad range of comprehensive student support services available to students, which is highly commendable. There were no significant issues found in this area of evaluation.

3.4. Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment

It was evident that both programmes have developed strong student-centred educational environments, with the students being well monitored and supported by the staff. Student learning is supported by various online resources, the use of which has been accelerated following the Covid-19 pandemic. A range of well-recognised formative and summative assessment tools are used to promote learning and to provide evidence that students have attained the learning outcomes. Both institutions have robust processes and policies in place to ensure academic integrity, ethics, tolerance and non-discrimination.

The panel would like to commend both institutions regarding the measures taken by both institutions and the programme staff to ensure the rapid transition to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to continue effective student education. Moreover, both programmes implemented measures to mitigate the loss of clinical experience resulting from the lock down periods, which allowed students to quickly regain clinical skills.

There were some issues in which both programmes should address. Firstly, better integration of the Lithuanian and International students on clinics would aid patient communication and cultural understanding. A more challenging issue is graduate career monitoring beyond three years post-graduation, where it is difficult to maintain high response rates. Having more comprehensive datasets on career progression would help both institutions plan undergraduate and postgraduate programme provision.

3.5. Teaching staff

There was evidence in both institutions of good working relationships between the staff and students resulting in good education environments. Teaching staff are well motivated and qualified, with many of the clinical staff also working part-time in external dental facilities, which provides a strong link to the requirements of the labour market. There are good staff-student ratios on clinics, which enables effective student supervision. The five yearly attestation process ensures staff maintain and develop their qualifications and skills, and both institutions provide access to good quality academic development programmes, especially regarding current pedagogical approaches.

Both institutions provide good support for staff and student academic mobility, however, the Covid-19 pandemic clearly had a negative impact of staff mobility and work is required to continue to increase staff academic mobility, especially for external academics visiting Lithuania.

3.6. Learning facilities and resources

It was clearly evident that both institutions have made significant investments in University-level learning facilities and resources, such as having high quality library facilities. Both institutions have plans to build new buildings, which will have a positive impact on odontology programmes. The most significant is the new Odontology Faculty (OF) building at LSMU, which will support modern integrated clinical teaching and will have significantly enhanced pre-clinical skills facilities. The panel consider that the opening of the new LSMU OF building is a major priority. Although the VU Institute of Dentistry building has modern clinical facilities, it does lack on-site dental technology laboratory facilities. The building of the new VU Faculty of Medicine Science Centre will include dental technology laboratory facilities, albeit not directly adjacent to the dental clinics. Furthermore, this new building will also include enhanced pre-clinical skills and research facilities, both of which will have a positive impact on student teaching. Both programmes should be mindful to continue to develop teaching of digital dentistry in the curriculum to keep pace with developments in clinical practice.

3.7. Study quality management and public information

Both programmes have well-developed quality assurance processes, including good representation of students and stakeholders, and use a range of quality assessment tools, which ensure continued programme enhancements. Nonetheless, there is scope to increase student and stakeholder engagement in surveys, to ensure a greater diversity of opinions, and to evaluate more use of other feedback mechanisms (e.g. focus groups). The latter point would provide more focussed and detailed information directly related to the programmes, which is not always achieved by generic university surveys. Furthermore, there is also scope to improve the communication of survey results and feedback outcomes, and to monitor the longitudinal impact of programme changes.

III. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Please give examples of excellence (if any) discovered while conducting the study field evaluation.

The research opportunities for students throughout the VU Odontology curriculum is exceptional and is likely to be further enhanced by the new research facilities available in the Faculty of Medicine Research building, which is due to open in 2024.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN DENTISTRY (ODONTOLOGY) STUDY FIELD

- **Strategic recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions (at institutional level):**
 1. Continued investment into digital dentistry infra-structure to keep pace with technological advancements in digital workflows, which are taking place in clinical dentistry.
 2. Improve completion rates for student and stakeholder feedback surveys, including medium-term graduate career surveys, to increase the validity of the datasets.
- **Strategic recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Science and Sport (at national level):**
 1. Allow institutions to change their programme names from “Odontology” to more internationally recognised terms such as “Dentistry” or “Dental Medicine”, especially for the international programmes.

Report language – English

© Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education