



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OVERVIEW REPORT FOR INFORMATION SERVICES STUDY FIELD
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the **Information Services** study field in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions: at *Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija*; at *Vilnius University*.

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

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for the Information Services study field in each evaluated Higher education institution (separately for first and second cycle) and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Information Services study field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of Information Services evaluation, the expert panel has come to a decision to give **positive** evaluation to HEIs: at *Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija*; at *Vilnius University*.

On the basis of an external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field and first cycle for 7 years at *Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija* and to accredit the study field and first and second cycles for 3 years at *Vilnius University*.

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 should cover all 7 evaluation areas.

1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

For a successful programme in Information Services, learning outcomes and curricula must be strong. It is essential to review learning outcomes and curricula regularly. The studies of Information Services in Lithuania have the possibility to offer significant learning in this area; however, studies must move away from surface learning to explore topics relevant to the field in greater depth, including through curricula and assessment.

The content of the study programmes in the field of Information Services allows learning flexibility for students, and helps them to adapt better in the job market. A strong focus on Information services topics will enable students to address the needs of the job market in this area.

2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Research is a recurring element in the Study Field programmes (both in methodological courses and substantive courses, as well as in internships and thesis work). The programmes have strong relationships with social partners and the labour market in research.

Professors and lecturers active in the study field engage in research activities and participate/publish in (international) conferences, journals and books. They are qualified researchers themselves as they participate/publish in (international) conferences, journals

and books, and also succeed in acquiring (European) research grants and are interdisciplinary in scope.

The focus of research lies both on applied research (College) aimed at solving a practical problems from the professional field, and on academic research (University) related to the communication and information research area which encompasses a wide variety of social science disciplines such as economy, business management, law, computer science and information technologies and more.

The link between the content of Information Services field studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology is well substantiated. The study field succeeds in establishing solid cross connections between social partners and the educational programs. Social partners typically participate in student conferences, offer practical placements, take seats in committees for final thesis defense, give guest lectures and round table discussions. Feedback from social partners about developments and needs in the labour market feeds directly back into the educational programs at both bachelor's and master level.

The Study Field Programmes offer students opportunities to participate in a variety of research activities: presentation in research conferences, paper writing, informal students' research union. They conduct research by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The Study Field Programme recommends students to participate in student conferences and encourages students to prepare CVs or competencies portfolios. The conditions for students to get involved in applied science activities are well developed and sufficiently consistent with their study cycle. However, there are also reasons on behalf of the students not to participate, such as having a job next to being a student, family obligations or social life activities. Programme management is recommended to think of ways to increase the number of students participating in extracurricular research activities.

3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

The students in the field of Information services have sufficient academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. The level of study information, counselling, and academic guidance meets the students' requirements.

The students of the field are especially happy with the benefits of internationalisation, and see new agreements between institutions, mobility programmes, and international visits as an opportunity to learn, and gain experience. However, the situation in Lithuania is not very welcoming to Information service study programmes, and as they are adapted to better suit the needs of a different niche in the job market, the content of the study programmes in Lithuania and abroad might be different, limiting the mobility opportunities for students.

Admission practices for Master's level programmes in Information Services should be open to intake from the full spectrum of disciplines. At the moment, the practice is limited to particular disciplines. Because the current Master's programme is the only programme which

can offer a degree qualification for professional placement in the workforce, it is essential that this programme should be more open, as is reflected in the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

The programme has good graduate employability. The employers have a positive opinion about the graduates and their competences. The graduates seem to find work placement relatively easily, though they may be directed to jobs in the field of Business.

The study process allows individualisation of studies and takes into account the needs of students.

Both institutions have a number of documents approved that help to focus attention on the issues and consequences of plagiarism, fraud, and academic dishonesty. Students are informed about disciplinary measures, tools for detection of plagiarism, and accepted practices. The implementation of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination policies occurs in both institutions.

5. TEACHING STAFF

Programmes in Lithuania are supported by qualified staff. However, the strengths of these staff are underutilised for the field of Information Services.

English is spoken. However, not all staff are fluent in English. This circumstance can negatively impact internationalisation.

6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Both institutions have sufficient resources and infrastructure for studies, and these are updated with an eye to future development. Additionally, students are supported holistically with respect to their academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal needs, and are well-informed about these supports.

7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Both institutions work toward assessing quality of education and solicit student feedback to help them assess programmes, although greater and focused quantitative and qualitative data collection in support of quality review are needed. The institutions are responsive to student needs and requests.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN INFORMATION SERVICES FIELD

➤ **Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):**

For SKS:

Clear, specific learning outcomes across the programme, courses, and assessment should be developed fully. Learning outcomes should be organised as generic and subject-specific graduate outcomes. Courses should be reduced in number and restructured into larger credit-bearing units to optimise the didactical model and to provide clarity for staff and students about programme learning.

Staff should develop their level of English to a fluent level. The staff should continue to participate in international teaching activities and research projects.

The types and topics for final projects should be expanded. Greater research activity should be incorporated into the compulsory programme, so that there is greater student participation.

For VU: The curricula in Information Services need to be revised to bring them in line with international standards for the preparation of students to work in the field of Information Services. Decisions are needed on whether to continue or discontinue these programmes as information services programmes, and then similarly develop or eliminate traces such as placements. Essentially, it is necessary to think carefully about your overall goals for these programmes and to follow through with appropriate planning.

➤ **Strategic recommendations at national level (for the Ministry of Education and Science):**

Re-establishing study programmes for the training of information service professionals, focusing on the fields of librarianship, information and communication. There is a systematic shortage of staff with formal university degrees in library, information and communication sciences and a systematic decline in their share of the sector's workforce. This problem was intensified by the cancellation in 2013 of library and information studies programmes at University, which trained highly qualified professionals. A situation where professional development activities are provided to professional groups without specific systematic library education, comprehensive knowledge beyond partial explanations or short-term strategies, may be a major cause of the sector's decline and a problem for the quality of professionalism in the sector as a whole.