STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INFORMATICS FIELD OF STUDY

OVERVIEW REPORT

Prepared by the chairpersons of the Informatics field of study expert panels:

1. Prof. dr. Johann Gamper
2. Prof. dr. Philippe Bonnet
3. Prof. dr. Steven P. Bradley

SKVC coordinator: Austėja Pliupelytė

Report prepared in 2024
Report language: English

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview report is based on the external evaluation of the Informatics field of study in the following Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

- Kaunas University of Technology;
- Klaipėda University;
- Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija;
- Lietuvos verslo kolegija;
- Mykolas Romeris University;
- SMK Aukštoji mokykla;
- Vilniaus verslo kolegija;
- Vilnius Gediminas Technical University;
- Vilnius University;
- Vytautas Magnus University.

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

This Overview report focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the field of study from a general point of view. External evaluation reports containing more detailed information on the field of study in the relevant HEIs, including evaluation points, commendations, and recommendations, are available on SKVC's website.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the decision has been made to give a positive evaluation to the following HEIs and cycles:

- Kaunas University of Technology;
- Klaipėda University;
- Klaipėdos valstybinė kolegija;
- Lietuvos verslo kolegija;
- Mykolas Romeris University;
- SMK Aukštoji mokykla;
- Vilniaus verslo kolegija;
- Vilnius Gediminas Technical University;
- Vilnius University;
- Vytautas Magnus University.
-

Upon receiving a positive evaluation, SKVC decides to either grant full accreditation to the field of study and cycle for a period of 7 years or provide partial accreditation for a period of 3 years. If the field of study and cycle is given negative evaluation, it is not accredited.

II. OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

This section of the Overview report highlights the overarching observations made by the expert panels regarding the positive aspects of the Informatics field of study in Lithuanian HEIs, as well as areas identified for improvement.

1. STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

The description of the group of fields of study in the computer sciences contains many learning outcomes. Most of them are positioned at a low level in the bloom taxonomy (with a majority of verbs at levels 1 and 2. Many HEIs (including KU and VVK) interpret these descriptors as requirements that should be achieved rather than minimally acceptable learning outcomes.

A recommendation would be to encourage HEIs to define fewer but more ambitious learning outcomes for their programme and describe in the SERs how their learning outcomes improve on the minima described by the ministry.

Curriculum is generally up-to-date and relevant to the employment market. Sometimes this is at the expense of coverage of some fundamental ideas within the group of fields of study.

2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Most institutions have staff who are working within the broader research community, particularly in applied areas.

The distinction between informatics and informatics engineering is difficult to understand and causes confusion. For instance, the Assessment Report of Comparative Expert Assessment of Research and Development Activities Carried out by Universities and Research Institutes for the Group of Units of Assessment from 2023 gives a very good appreciation of informatics at Klaipeda University, but a poor appreciation of informatics engineering. It might make sense to merge general informatics with informatics engineering, and create a new category for programmes in AI and data science.

3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admissions seem to work without problems on the whole. There are isolated instances where it isn't clear in advance what the difference is between different programmes of study, and changing between them can be problematic during the programme. Student support is strong, with some excellent examples of disability support. More could be done to monitor gender balance within the student and staff cohort. This is a common problem internationally, and it is unusual not to at least have statistics routinely collected.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

There are excellent links with employers and other social partners, who value the graduates and provide excellent support to the programmes of study.

Assessment is good but sometimes overly "traditional" with relatively little group work and a restricted range of assessment types.

5. TEACHING STAFF

Staff are well-qualified and do a good job, but given the disparity between industrial and academic salaries, it can be hard to recruit and retain staff. This is a recurring problem internationally within computing and related disciplines.

In the region of Klaipeda, many teaching staff are involved in several HEIs. This causes confusion in terms of reporting research activities. It is recommended that staff have a primary affiliation where they do their research as well as teaching, and possibly a secondary affiliation where they teach.

6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Most computing resources are good, but more emphasis could be made on supporting the use of students' devices within the university infrastructure, e.g., WiFi and cloud access, rather than through labs of fixed computers.

Many colleges invest in PCs and screens that may or may not be used depending on the number of students. It is recommended that such investments should be replaced by investments in cheap terminals for students who do not have a laptop and online, elastic solutions that can exactly fit the needs of the HEI on a monthly basis.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Students are generally happy and have good opportunities to contribute to the direction of curriculum development, although at times it could be clearer what formal role they have in committees, i.e., do they have a vote. There are usually excellent informal feedback mechanisms between students and staff. Sometimes information about programme evaluation is not shared on the university website - at least in the English version.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INFORMATICS FIELD OF STUDY

Strategic recommendations at an institutional level (for HEIs)

None

Strategic recommendations at the national level (for the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport)

- To monitor gender balance within staff and student cohorts, and to make reporting of this part of the self-evaluation documentation for reviewers to consider.

Recommendations on the evaluation process for Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)

None