



**STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

PHILOSOPHY FIELD OF STUDY

OVERVIEW REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

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

- Klaipėda University;
- Vytautas Magnus University;
- Vilnius 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.

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

- Klaipėda University;
- Vytautas Magnus University;
- Vilnius 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 panel regarding the positive aspects of the philosophy field of study in Lithuanian HEIs, as well as areas identified for improvement.

1. STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Of the evaluated programmes, only the BA and MA programmes (240 ECTS and 120 ECTS, respectively) of Vilnius University (henceforth, VU) qualify as a complete academic education in philosophy. In contrast, the MA programme in Practical Philosophy (120 ECTS) of Vytautas Magnus University (henceforth, VMU) and the MA programme in Professional Ethics and the Audit of Ethics (90 ECTS) of Klaipeda University (henceforth, KU) have a specific focus, which is reflected in their study aims, learning outcomes and the composition of their curricula. All programmes meet the quantitative requirements of the Descriptor of the Philosophy Study Field. This also applies to the ways in which they meet the needs of society and the labour market. The programmes are coherent and ensure a consistent development of the students' competencies and offer them ample opportunities to personalize their studies without compromising the coherence of these programmes. The programmes, and especially those in practical and applied philosophy, include sufficient interdisciplinary elements. Students and teachers are very involved in the programme, which explains why the students commended their teachers for the quality of their supervision work and their accessibility. As to the programme of KU, the Panel strongly recommends creating a stronger academic philosophical framework in professional ethics in order to enhance its compliance with the qualitative requirements of the Descriptor in the Philosophy Study Field.

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

As to the programmes of VU and VMU, the Panel was impressed with the range and quality of research. There is a good support structure for research, and both Departments have a good sense of how to further improve their research profiles. There is good integration of the latest research into teaching, which is revised and adapted to meet important new research findings, as well as student interests. As to the programme of KU, the Panel recommends paying more attention to improving its research quality.

The Panel recommends all programmes to spend more attention on how to engage students in scientific research activities, and to explore the possibility of more inter-Lithuanian research cooperation and collaboration with philosophy departments in other institutions.

3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Admission to all programmes is transparent and consistently applied via national systems. Academic and information support and library access are adequate; financial, social, and wellbeing supports are in place. Opportunities for Erasmus+ mobility are in place and recognition is ensured through Learning Agreements. Students are introduced to programme requirements at the start of the year. Teachers are highly accessible and responsive.

The Panel recommends the MA programmes of VU and KU to reconsider their student admission criteria by following the recommendations of the Descriptor for Philosophy on this point more closely. Students of VU confirmed heterogeneous prior knowledge at MA entry, and the Panel noted that the students of KU had a

rather weak level of prior philosophical knowledge at the entry of the MA programme. In this respect, the admission criteria of VMU are a positive exception, since they stipulate (among others) that prospective students write a motivation letter.

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

The programme has a flexible organization of the study process. Teaching and learning address the needs of students very well and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured through both legal acts and the physical environment. The monitoring of learning progress is realized very well, and the feedback to students to promote learning progress planning is provided after every intermediate assessment and exam. The policy to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination, and the procedure for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are very well ensured.

5. TEACHING STAFF

The student-staff ratio of the programmes is very good. Staff are well-qualified, well-supported, and are improving their qualifications year-on-year in a range of areas. The programme benefits from an 'open-questions culture' among the staff, and communications with administration are also good. Staff are given ample opportunities and significant support from senior management with respect to mobility and career development.

6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

In general, facilities, informational, and financial resources are very good and very well-suited for effective learning in the field, with continuous upgrade mechanisms in place.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

The programmes meet the requirements for internal quality assurance very well, maintain constant communication with lecturers, students, and alumni, and keep everyone informed about changes. The administration is open and transparent in creating the programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY FIELD OF STUDY

Strategic recommendations at an institutional level (for HEIs)

1. Make the admission criteria for the MA programmes stricter and adapt them to the specific character of these programmes.
2. More collaboration is needed among the philosophy departments and their programmes in Lithuania. This recommendation applies to teaching, learning (student mobility in Lithuania) and research.

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

1. Reconsider the Descriptor of the Philosophy Study Field in order to make it more flexible and adapted to the specific character of programmes with a specific focus (practical philosophy, applied ethics).
2. At this moment, there is one full-fledged traditional BA and MA programme in philosophy (offered by VU), whereas two other institutions (VMU and KU) have a specific focus (practical philosophy and applied ethics). In the opinion of the Panel, this is a suitable division of labour and a guarantee for the viability of philosophy in Lithuania. Philosophy programmes in other specific fields of interest (e.g. artificial intelligence) can be welcomed, but the Panel deems that the (traditional) BA/MA programme in philosophy from VU covers the needs of Lithuanian society.

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

1. The panel found the SERs of all programmes rather descriptive than analytic, let alone evaluative. Yet the questions asked in the guidelines stimulate the programmes to evaluate themselves. To solve this problem SKVC can be more critical about the submitted SERs before they are forwarded to the External Evaluation Panel, and/or include the requirement to draft an extensive SWOT analysis in the guidelines for the departments.