



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto

**ŽURNALISTIKOS IR MEDIJŲ STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS**

**(valstybinis kodas 612P50002)**

**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT OF  
JOURNALISM AND MEDIA ANALYSIS**

**(state code 612P50002)**

**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Vytautas Magnus University

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**DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ**

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Valstybinis kodas	621P50002
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	žurnalistika
Studijų programos rūšis	magistrantūros
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinės (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Žurnalistikos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2007 m., atnaujinta 2011m.

#### INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Journalism and Media Analysis</i>
State code	621P50002
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Journalism
Kind of the study programme	Master's
Cycle of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full Time (2)
Scope of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Journalism
Date of registration of the study programme	2007, Renewed 2011

Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras

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## PREFACE

Our Assessment Team was appointed by The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education to conduct an evaluation of the study programme *Journalism and Media Analysis* (612P50002). In conducting our evaluation of the study programme, the Assessment Team have applied the methodological guidelines developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

The following analysis is based on the self-evaluation report, plus site visits and interviews with relevant stakeholders conducted in Kaunas on the campus of Vytautas Magnus University on November 22, 2012.

Team members found the schedule of meetings to be valuable and as efficiently scheduled as possible, to make maximum use of the limited time the team had to conduct its work. University administrators, teaching staff, students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders were invariably gracious and helpful in answering questions from team members.

In conducting their evaluation of the study programme, the Assessment Team has applied the methodological guidelines developed by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education to implement provisions of the Order No. ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister of Education and Science “On the approval of the description of the procedure for the external assessment and accreditation of study programmes” (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 96-4083), following the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (Official Gazette, 2009, No. 54-2140).

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Graduate Programme in Journalism and Media Analysis at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) is implemented by the Department of Public Communications. VMU is a classic university with Liberal Arts traditions. The history of the Department dates back to 1998, when the Graduate School of Journalism was established at the Institute of International Law and Politics, which in the course of further developments was re-organized into two faculties: the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy and the Faculty of Law. The VMU set of values listed in the University's vision statement emphasizes internationalization of studies, promotion of interdisciplinary approaches, maintaining critical awareness and engagement of professional skills.

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### *1. Programme aims and learning outcomes*

The programme aims are three-fold. The establishment of the graduate school at VMU follows the historical line in Kaunas where journalism has been viewed as an integral part of social sciences. The University also made a strategic decision to focus on graduate level education of journalists and other communication professionals. It was viewed that BA level substance knowledge originating from a variety of disciplines would be complemented with new knowledge and professional skills in journalism on MA level. The move to focus on MA level was motivated by the need to advance media research in the country.

With the design of the new BA program in Public Communications (in 2009) the goals and aims of the MA program have changed. The BA program in Public Communications has a strong focus on professional training and aims to show all complexity of the communications field (with specialization streams in journalism, PR and publishing); the MA has a stronger focus on self-reflection, analysis and research. Accordingly, the journalism education at VMU was deliberately designed to differ markedly from the journalism education given at other universities in the country.

The MA programme objectives should, according to the self-assessment report (SAR) of the programme, take into consideration the most important trends and changes in the contemporary societies which are described as follows:

- (a) The institution of journalism, its practices, professional routines and all professional considerations, as well as its discourses, take over the coloration of its surrounding social and political reality;
- (b) The field of modern communications, associated with its diversity and multiplicity, with a certain hybridity and poly-centrality of different power centers regulating and managing diverse communicative flows;
- (c) Social polarization and fragmentation which is another attribute of contemporary societies – user-centered and engagement-oriented communication.

The designers of the programme see as a goal for the education of today's communication professionals a broader spectrum of skills and critical awareness, emphasizing analysis and critical reflection about the functions of the profession, circled by political, technological, economic and audience pressures.

The learning outcomes are, according to the SAR, the following:

1. General competences to apply analytical thinking to all that journalists do – from challenging the authenticity of information and news sources to understanding the societal processes and behaviour patterns and motivations of people:
  - 1.1. To analyze the functions of journalism, as a structural element of the media system, in a democratic civil society;
  - 1.2. To apply qualitative, quantitative and comparative research methodology and empirical data collection techniques in communication and media research.
2. Subject competences related to making informed judgments about the newsworthiness of events, or finding the right experts to comment on important issues:
  - 2.1. To work with various information sources, identify news values, do interviews, prepare reports, analyze, summarize, and raise good problem questions.
3. Process competences related to knowledge about communication process and the factors influencing it:
  - 3.1. To explore the processes within media and public space on the national and international levels and to assess them in a broader socio--cultural, economic, political and historical context;
  - 3.2 To evaluate transformations of media systems in the context of globalization and mediatisation, analyzing the information content, audiences, technology, and organizations.
4. Competences of professional skills and values related to the general social role of journalists and the norms guiding their behaviour:
  - 4.1. To demonstrate solid knowledge of systems of media regulation, standards of journalistic ethics, and communication cultural differences; and to apply the principles of socially responsible journalism;
  - 4.2 To apply techniques and methods of gathering, selecting, evaluating, writing and editing news, while using different types and sources of information, given the media users and different channels.

Programme graduates are supposed to acquire the qualifications to work in print, radio, television and online media organizations; journalism and media research and training institutions; media monitoring organizations and market research companies. The Master's Programme in Journalism and Media Analysis qualifies for further studies, including PhD programmes.

The programme is thoroughly thought and ambitious, although the aims remain very broad and they do not have a clear focus. Most often journalism education has – also on the graduate level – a media specific focus with only a light general social science frame. In this particular case, journalism and media are investigated within a distinctly broader context, covering political, sociological and philosophical aspects. The programme is markedly a product of the past 10-15 years, paying tribute to the media studies tradition in communication research. Within the frame of journalism education, this kind of programme is in fact quite unique. In the area of media studies, such a focus is more common.

However, this kind of combination of journalism and media analysis is not without problems. The basic objectives are in line with the mission and vision statements of the University, but the programme also indicates how difficult it is to find a balance between professional education of journalists and more theoretically oriented researcher education.

This is definitely a programme with ambitious academic goals. However, one might question, whether it provides education that the country's mainly commercially oriented media industry prefers. In today's

world, it is important to provide the media market journalists with graduate level education, but the proportions of theory and practice in their education are not easily adjusted to the requirements of the work in present-day newsrooms – what is needed most? This programme gives an example of problems which are encountered when both professional and research oriented goals run parallel. A context is definitely needed, but the multitude of theoretically relevant aspects in this programme tend to suppress a deepened, analytical gaze at professionalism in journalism. Especially learning outcomes 1.1 and 1.2 might be difficult to be fulfilled simultaneously.

Further, the documents included in the evaluation indicate that the programme does not have regular contacts with the media market in the country. Obviously no market survey has been carried out while preparing the programme, but stakeholder representatives and social partners – often former students of the programme – are and have been involved in the Study Programme Committee. There is a student survey included in the documents, as such quite limited and mainly focusing on economic questions of studying. However, its results confirm that the academic standard of the programme is experienced as being high, but the attention given to practical skills remains modest.

The programme of Journalism and Media Analysis is carried out in English as 20 other VMU Master's programmes, This fact is presented in the SAR as an indication of the University's interest in internationalization. However, there is a special relationship between journalism and language. Language is not only a tool for journalism; journalism is in fact created in language. Most academic journalism programmes do not only teach journalistic genres, style and rhetoric, but also grammar, vocabulary and comprehension. Accordingly, it were consistent to carry out this kind of programme or at least its practical parts in the Lithuanian language. It remains unclear which parts of the programme can be completed in Lithuanian. Obviously, at least most students prefer writing their theses in their mother tongue.

In general, a thought worth considering is the fact that the two MA programmes offered by VMU (Journalism and Media Analysis, and Integrated Communications) could be profiled better. The two programmes seem to attract the same students and the students, after graduation, seem to work in very similar jobs. There is space for a differentiation of the two programmes.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### *Strengths:*

- High academic quality as goal
- Well thought and original programme design
- Good point of departure for research intensive studies

#### *Weaknesses:*

- Very broad learning outcomes which are not easily fulfilled simultaneously
- Aims not quite clear
- Main language of instruction English which is not ideal for journalism education

## **2. Curriculum design**

The Journalism and Media Analysis programme consists of 120 ECTS credits: 9 obligatory courses (54 ECTS credits); 3 elective courses (18 ECTS credits); research projects (12 ECTS credits); internship (6 ECTS credits) and Master's Thesis (30 ECTS). Each study programme course, except for the Master's Thesis, amounts to 6 ECTS credits, in total 160 hours.

All the legal requirements for MA level education are fulfilled with the programme output. The self-assessment report plus other documents give a detailed picture of the implementation of the programme and the assessment of student performance. However, some aspects such as the use of literature remain diffuse. The fact that all courses have the same volume (6 ECTS credits) is worth re-consideration, because the more practically oriented courses demand extended volume and some optional courses could in fact be distinctly smaller (e.g. 3 credits only). Another possibility is to move toward a module system with several internally consistent courses which consist of, say, 20-25 ECTS.

The programme has a marked emphasis on theory. Less than one-third (18+6 ECTS, that is 20%) of the course credits come from practice oriented courses. There are actually only three of such courses. One 6 credit package comes from the internship project.

The course structure is described in a clear-cut manner, most courses following the same format: of lectures, seminars, discussions and group work, all totalling to 160 study hours (6 ECTS credits). However, it would have been instructive to indicate more clearly what kind of assignments are given as part of the instruction and how the teacher ensures that the students really command the knowledge made available during the course.

The altogether 16 elements included in the programme can be assessed to cover all the basic dimensions, least the dimension of the institution of journalism. The first year of studies appears as being extremely general, lacking a proper focus.

There are six theory oriented compulsory courses, and in addition, a student can choose three voluntary courses from a list of five. At the end of the study period, a student participates in two projects, aimed to combine research and practice, plus writes a thesis and conducts an internship at a media institution. The logic of the courses is indicated and seems consistent, but there are no notions about the eventual flexibility of course order or eventual compensations with other courses. Both are today relevant questions, because students are encouraged to study abroad. A tight two-year programme does not make such a move easy to materialize, if there is no flexibility included in the programme. The self-assessment document emphasizes the strong component of internationalization, but is not very explicit about how eventual problems emerging around student exchange are taken care of.

In a scrutiny of the programme, the titles of the obligatory theoretically oriented courses represent very ambitious dimensions (*Communication in Modernity, Communication and Media Philosophy, Communication Cultures, Political Communication and Mediatization*). The course outlines and the literature included indicate a good acquaintance of recent dominant trends in the field. There are also some peculiarities: for example, a strong emphasis on globalization and oral history (the latter even as part of a practical course of news reporting).

In several cases, the area to be covered according to the course description is extremely wide. An extreme case is the first-semester course *Communication in Modernity* (previously *Media Theories*). According to the course description the content sweeps over several large substance areas (globalization, localization, liberalism, fragmentation, democracy, technology, visual culture and many others, all provided with a historical connection). All this is supposed to be covered in 10 hours of lectures, 20 hours of seminars and 50 hours of group work, plus in written assignments and individual student work for 70 hours. First-



semester students might feel quite alone with such huge and complicated theme areas, even if they have some background in social sciences. The course might fit better in the second year of studies.

The institution of journalism, to be opened up properly, requires also simple data and analysis of media structures, professional qualities of journalists, etc. Perhaps these areas are supposed to be covered by assignments. “Students develop understanding of core key issues and concepts” and “Students critically examine academic literature and participate in debates” are given as criteria of learning achievement, but it is not clear how they can reach such a demanding level. This applies especially to situations when a student only has 30 credits of social sciences on his/her account. Is s/he able to digest the substance?

In the course, the concrete side of the institution of journalism seems to be put fairly much aside – there is a danger that the context robs the picture totally. Also the recommended literature listed as part of the course outline refers to the same direction: Beck, Bauman, Castells, Bourdieu, Habermas, Silverstone, Thompson. The course description – as all the course descriptions – does not give a clear-cut picture of how the literature is used as part of the course substance. Is there any difference in the use and availability of reference and supplementary literature? According to the institution visit, there seems to be quite a variation in the volume of used literature used by different teachers.

The excessive content of the above course could perhaps be evened by adding some of its substance to the course *Communication Cultures*, although also it has quite a wide scope, but there also is some overlapping with *Communication in Modernity*.

The content of the course *Communication and Media Philosophy* is far more focused than the two previous ones, and it brings into discussion also themes which are relevant for the practical courses (truth, objectivity, ethics, linguistic elements). Somewhat surprisingly, Malcolm McLuhan’s work seems to catch attention in this course as well as in an optional course (*Media Innovations and Creativity*).

Many MA programmes do not include methods courses in their curricula, but such a course is justified in this case, because students come from a variety of disciplines. *Communication Research: Discourses and Methods* discusses research design and methods, with an emphasis on qualitative methods. In the given frames, the content of the course seems to be consistent, although the requirements for the students appear as being quite high, if this is the first time they get acquainted with media research.

Compared with most newswriting and audio-visual journalism courses in other professional journalism programmes, the volume of the practical courses is limited. According to the documentation given, the third practical course was added to the programme recently. Two of the three practical courses represent established areas (news reporting, audio-visual journalism), while the most recent course (*Creative Online Writing*) represents a new approach and includes also some more theoretical elements. It is worth appreciation that the practical courses also include theoretical elements, thus increasing the integration of the two aspects.

An eternal debate concerning journalism education is the order of studies: theory or practical skills first? Students tend to prefer the skills, teachers most often the more theoretical start. Today, it can be claimed that the ‘theory first’ approach is stronger. The programme under scrutiny takes a middle-of-the road approach, offering both theoretical courses and newswriting parallel during the first semester. In the course *Fundamentals of News Reporting*, the strong focus on oral communication and oral history creates question marks – especially because language as such seems to get a very limited attention in the course.

In most newswriting courses, the main focus is on polishing journalistic expression in very practical cases. For an outsider, it remains unclear, whether this course is offered in English or Lithuanian.

The above notions are examples of the questions rising from a scrutiny of the detailed curriculum description. There are more: for example, one can question the relevance of some optional courses. For example, the course *Media Innovations and Creativity* raises some questions. There also is a more practically oriented course *Creative Online Writing* and there is a possibility to participate in a research project in *Creative Online Writing*. Perhaps the interest in the 'new' forms of expression is so great that it has been found relevant to include several courses on the area in the programme, thus offering students a form of specialization.

Two other courses also catch an evaluator's eye: *Propaganda Criticism* and *Postcoloniality in Eastern and Central Europe*. Judged from a positive perspective, the programme wants to make explicit an analytical approach to recent phenomena in the country and its neighbours. It is relevant for media professionals to know the history of their society. Especially the course of propaganda includes interesting elements of persuasion and the history of propaganda. However, when even the mode of news lacks a historic-theoretical course in the programme, one can question the relevance of this special course. Even more questions are caused by the course on postcoloniality. The title limits the scope to Eastern and Central European region – but by doing this, the course in fact distorts the concept of postcoloniality. In the content description, only short references are made to colonialism and postcolonialism as global phenomena. Colonialism as such is an important theme area, and it could well be discussed as part of the course of political communication, but a narrow specific course adds to fragmenting the focus of the educational line.

In sum, the composition of the curriculum leaves some question marks especially concerning media professionalism, although the design appears as thoroughly thought out. However, one could almost claim that the programme tries too hard and wants to accomplish too much in a two-year Master's programme.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### *Strengths:*

- High ambition level in theoretical courses.
- Relevant literature attached to the courses.
- Theory elements are integrated in practical journalism courses.

#### *Weaknesses:*

- It is not always clear how the various courses are integrated and linked to the topic of the programme.
- Some courses are very broad and academically (too) heavy.
- Too few courses in practical journalism.
- One might wonder whether it is justified that all course volumes are standardised at 6 ECTS.

### **3. Teaching staff**

The teaching staff meets the legal requirements of the Lithuanian state as well as the internal requirements set by VMU. Following these, the staff is monitored on an annual basis with regard to a whole range of activities (publishing, membership of editorial boards, network-building, curriculum development, participation in professional seminars and trainings, etc.). Every five years “full attestation of teachers and researchers takes place ... and is performed by the Attestation Committee formed by the VMU Senate. This continuous monitoring is accompanied by various offers through which the staff can develop. A majority of the courses (80%) is taught by full-time research staff who teaches seminars in relation to their research interests. Most teachers are active in research and publish both in Lithuania and internationally as well as participate in a number of international projects, associations and conferences. The staff, who teach applied subjects all have “working experience [of] no less than 3 years well corresponding to the field of subject taught”.

As there is a continuous movement of staff up the academic career ladder, there is a gradual need for and influx of junior researchers, who -according to the SAR- are hired through an “Open Competition for Academic Staff that is announced by VMU with requirements and information on competition details announced through the university as well as the Research Council of Lithuania websites”. In order to assure the new knowledge that new staff members bring, there has been an effort to get these to co-teach with staff who have been employed for a number of years. In relation to this it is stated that a “particular feature of the programme is that most of the courses are delivered by collaborative teaching initiatives. This has been introduced in 2008 to give an opportunity for students to gain more up-to-date knowledge and skills from different experts.” This means that the “ratio of teachers and students in lectures and seminars of the programme can vary from 10 to 30”. Having several teachers for one course is a luxury not often feasible for Master programmes, but the same phenomenon can also cause confusion among students, if the cooperation is not perfect. Some students mentioned this problem.

According to the self-assessment report, the “total teacher’s workload is 36 hours per week, which includes teaching hours, scientific research and methodical work. In average, the teaching load encompasses 12-18 hours per week. The remaining workload is planned by the teacher himself/herself and is distributed between academic writing, research work, preparation of teaching materials, etc.”

The quality and conditions of the teaching and research staff are very satisfactory in relation to the study programme, its learning outcomes as well as the number of students. There is, in addition, a good infrastructure for the continuous improvement of the quality of the teaching and research delivered, as well as for the links between research and teaching. Due to the low ratio between teachers and students there is ample opportunities for face-to-face interactions, and this was also confirmed at the visit, where many students praised the accessibility of the professors.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

##### *Strengths*

A majority of the courses in the programme are taught by active researchers and/or teachers with relevant practical experiences. The university monitors the activities of the staff on a continuous basis, and, in relation to this, offers a range of activities to improve the quality of the staff. The quality of the teaching staff is high. Conditions for research are adequate.

##### *Weaknesses*

While most of the staff have strong research credentials it should be pointed out that some of these conduct research that is somewhat removed from aspects of journalism. Part-time teachers are not totally integrated in the team.

#### **4. *Facilities and learning resources***

The premises for lectures and group work at VMU are many, and the halls are well equipped for teaching and small group work purposes. Rather recently (2010), the VMU established a newsroom with radio and Internet TV studios, and a workshop room with a computer and multimedia projector intended for students' and teachers' meetings, group work and practical Master classes. The radio and TV studios appear modest but functioning, although they can hardly be called a Media Lab. The University is in the process of receiving more equipment. However, such facilities are going to be used by all practical training courses and groups at the University.

One of the problems is that the premises and especially the premises meant for practical print journalism training have been integrated with the VMU publicity work: students are encouraged to contribute to a variety of journals meant for public information and research publicity. This is as such a relevant field, but a slight contradiction could be found here, taking into account the elaborate considerations about present-day media roles in the theory courses and the possibility of ending up to operate as PR agents of the University during the practical courses.

Concerning study materials, there seems to be enough study places, online database services and books in the library at the VMU. However, some students complain about the availability of printed materials. This is crucial, knowing how central literature has been indicated to be for the studies on MA level.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

##### *Strengths:*

A central location of the department as well as a close and conducive vicinity between administration, teaching rooms and other learning facilities. Premises for basic practical training in journalism are satisfactory, as are premises for lecturing, group work, and individual problem-solving at the library.

##### *Weaknesses:*

Premises for practical training in journalism not well organised. Occasional scarcity in library supplies. Part of practical journalism training linked with the needs of the whole University.

#### **5. *Study process and students' performance assessment***

The admission requirements are clear: an applicant must have reached the BA degree (in any subject), plus s/he must have studied social sciences with a minimum of 20 ECTS. In addition, a good command of English is demanded. The applicants are interviewed in order to judge their motivation.

The successful completion of the programme might depend considerably on the educational background of students. A student having completed a BA in Public Communications at the VMU has good chances to complete the MA programme successfully. However, if a student has a BA degree in a totally different discipline, his/her chances to digest properly the contextual dimensions might become a problem. The programme is perfect for students planning a future at the university as an academician.

The organization of the programme, covering general competence, subject competence, process competence and competences of professional skills fits the MA level. However, the first year of studies is very general, lacking a proper focus. An evaluator is almost tempted to suggest that the introductory courses of the first year could be placed at the end of the programme.

The volume of credits (30) for thesis work seems to be right, but the proportions are difficult to judge, because the course description describes the process, not the phases and grading of the exercise. The idea of public defence is interesting and no doubt useful. However, it is not clear how much the oral defence itself carries weight in the assessment.

The criteria for assessing student performance on individual courses remain slightly unclear. The mid-term assessment is a good arrangement.

The description of the internship (6 credits) is diffuse, leaving it open, whether this ‘course’ – so it is called – means an observant analysis of the functioning of the media or an actual internship, working in newsrooms. According to the information gathered during the institution visit, the latter is more common. The cooperation with media institutions seems to function well, which is respectable. The length of the internship is not specified; it is only said that its minimum volume is 6 weeks. During the site visit, it appeared that the length seems to vary considerably.

In general, the atmosphere for studies appears as encouraging, and the cooperation between teachers and students appears as close, almost intimate, and understanding. However, a slightly confusing aspect of student assessment is the fact that obviously extremely few students fail to pass a course. As such, continuous assessment is a just system but if the study is fulfilled in very close and encouraging cooperation with the students, a clear-cut policy line concerning assessment easily gets obscure.

The methods and strategies to tackle plagiarism are described in a very rudimentary fashion. Firstly, any preventive measures were not presented and, secondly, it seems odd that students cheating are given a (very negative) mark only, rather than having his/her work rejected completely, plus further sanctions. The formal procedures for appeal are, in addition, not described.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

### *Strengths*

The monitoring of student progress is thorough and responsive in both a formal and informal fashion. The first in terms of registration and surveys, the latter through close teacher-student relations. In addition to this, each course has a clear description of the assessment criteria and exam methods. The mid-term assessment is a good arrangement.

### *Weaknesses*

There are no bridging courses which would help to reconcile the heterogeneous background of the students. Assessment criteria for individual courses are not always clear. With respect to the master thesis: it is unclear what the requirements for the oral presentations are and how much this counts towards the final grade. Also, the roles of the participants on the evaluation committee are not clear. The procedures regarding plagiarism are not wholly transparent. It is not clear how dropout percentages are calculated.

## **6. Programme management**

The extremely well prepared SAR and the documents included as appendices indicate that the programme is well monitored. The staff knows what is happening in the individual courses, thus promoting these courses to be integrated into a programme. The role of part-time teachers – mainly practitioners – is different. They seem to remain in the margins. Teachers of general subjects are also slightly less involved. However, it is still justified to state that the MA programme in Journalism and Media Analysis is a programme, not a collection of individual courses.

The programme has been renewed once, obviously after an internal need to improve the academic performance. No market survey for market needs has been carried out. However, a survey among former alumni students has been repeated. Thus it is perhaps justified to state that market monitoring is not systematic, but the academic standard of the programme has been monitored regularly. Students are also heard regularly via feedback surveys and discussions in class. This kind of feedback control seems to be a common practice.

The Study Programme Committee has a well-defined structure and members coming from the practical side of the field as well. The Committee meets regularly. However, it is not quite clear how strongly the Committee is able to affect the content of the programme. In general, there seems to be a certain distance felt in cooperation with social partners, if they do not happen to be former alumni of the programme.

The popularity of the programme shows a slight decline, but it is still very popular, and the decline can be interpreted with economic realities as well. Students have lost part of their public economic support.

Roughly 80 percent of the applicants in fact apply to the both MA programmes at VMU in this field (Journalism and Media Analysis or Integrated Communications), pointing out to two distinctly different dimensions. It is justified to state that the students in fact seem to prefer to continue studies at the VMU, not necessarily in the MA in Journalism and Media Analysis as such.

The dropout degree is considerably low, although it is not quite clear how the level of dropouts has been defined.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### *Strengths*

The structure of management of the programme is clear and systematic and with a strong focus on quality control. Also, it seems that the department and faculty is characterised by a culture in which there is little distance between students and teachers as well as between the various levels of management. Finally, the high quality of the SAR, as well as the organisation and the structure of the visit, attest to a very competent management as and a well-run department.

### *Weaknesses*

While the structure seems clear and laudable, there is also a sense in which it seems that the open culture of communication at the department at times replaces and thus make less transparent the formal structures of management. Regular market monitoring is lacking. There is space for a differentiation of the two master's programmes (Journalism and Media Analysis versus Integrated Communications). Part-time teachers are not integrated in the community.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. While the learning outcomes are well defined, more focus should be given to how the various learning outcomes are related and how they are layered in order to cumulate to an integrated whole.
- 3.2. The procedures for the Study Programme Committee need to be more systematic and transparent.
- 3.3. It is recommended to monitor students coming from different academic backgrounds, and, in case of differences in study performance, it is advised to require them to take bridging courses.
- 3.4. The order of the programme courses belonging to the first and second year schedules should be reconsidered, placing the contextual courses of first semester after practical courses. However, the substance of the practical courses should include also theoretical elements as indicated in the existing curriculum.
- 3.5. Assessment criteria for individual courses should be made more explicit. Also, the plagiarism procedures needs to rethought.
- 3.6. The programme should make more use of its social partners, especially because they seem to be willing, even eager, to cooperate. Market surveys are recommended.
- 3.7. The volumes of individual courses should be reconsidered, taking into account the possibility to directing programme planning toward module structures, thus forming larger components which allow variation of course volumes, needed especially in more practice oriented courses.
- 3.8. With its qualified teaching staff and two high-quality MA programmes, the department should consider starting a PhD programme in the field of communication and media studies.

### IV. SUMMARY

**Programme aims and learning outcomes.** In this programme, journalism and media are studied within a distinctly broader context, covering political, sociological and philosophical aspects. Within the frame of journalism education, this kind of programme is in fact quite unique.

The programme is thoroughly thought and ambitious, but the aims and learning outcomes remain very broad, lacking a clear focus. The programme has ambitious academic goals. However, it is questionable, whether it provides professional education that the country's mainly commercially oriented media industry prefers.

In journalism programmes, the proportions of theory and practice are not easily adjusted. This programme gives an example of problems which are encountered when both professional and research oriented goals run parallel. A context is definitely needed, but the multitude of theoretically relevant aspects in this programme tend to muffle a deep, analytical gaze at professionalism in journalism. Some learning outcomes (e.g. 1.1 and 1.2) might be difficult to be fulfilled simultaneously.

The fact that English is the main language of instruction in this particular programme can be challenged, because it offers professional education of journalists. Journalism is based on qualified and diversified instruction of the language that the media in the society use.

In addition to this programme, the department offers another MA programme. Both programmes focus on aspects of communication and have overlapping teaching staff. According to the given documentation, they also tend to attract the same students, who, after graduation, enter the same type of jobs. There is space for a differentiation of the two programme profiles.

**Curriculum design.** All the legal requirements for MA level education are fulfilled. The programme has a marked theoretical emphasis. Only less than one-third of the course credit volume comes from practically oriented courses. The structure of the courses is worth reconsideration: some very general and demanding first-year courses could be offered during the second year, and it is worth considering that the practical courses also include theoretical elements, thus increasing integrity of the two aspects which often are taught separately. Furthermore, the division of all courses (except the master thesis) into blocks of 6 ECTS might also benefit from being re-examined with regard to what each course adds towards a more integrated whole. The more practically oriented courses demand extensive volume and some optional course could be distinctly smaller. Another possibility is to move toward a module system with several internally consistent courses.

The course outlines and the literature included indicate a good acquaintance of recent dominant trends in the field. The SAR plus its appendices give a detailed picture of the implementation of the courses. However, some aspects such as the use of literature remain diffuse.

**Teaching staff.** The quality and conditions of the teaching and research staff are very adequate in relation to the study programme, its learning outcomes as well as the number of students. There is a good infrastructure for the continuous improvement of the quality of the teaching and research delivered as well as for the links between research and teaching.

A majority of the courses (80%) are taught by full-time research staff, who teaches seminars in relation to their research interests. Most teachers are active in research and publish both in Lithuania and internationally. Part-time teachers are not fully integrated into the programme.

**Facilities and learning outcomes.** The low teacher-student ratio coupled with close vicinity between administration, commons room and teaching rooms assure that there is a daily interaction between teachers and students. The availability of lecture halls, group study rooms and online materials is good, but there have been problems with literature. The VMU established recently a newsroom with radio and Internet TV studios intended for group work and practical Master classes. The radio and TV studios appear modest but functioning. The University is in the process of receiving more equipment. However, such facilities are going to be used by all practical training courses and groups at the University.

One of the problems concerning premises meant for practical journalism training has been the fact that this work is partly integrated with the VMU publicity activity. This is as such a relevant field, but a professional contradiction could be found in the possibility of students operating as PR agents of the University during their practical courses.

**Study process and assessment.** The learning atmosphere is supportive, although the criteria for assessing student performance on individual courses remain slightly unclear. However, students are heard regularly via feedback surveys and discussions in class. The mid-term assessment is a good arrangement.



The volume of credits for thesis work is good, but the proportions of the credits for the written report versus oral defence remain diffuse.

The successful completion of the programme might depend considerably on the educational background that is the field of BA studies. If a student has a BA degree in a totally different discipline, his/her chances to digest properly the demanding contextual dimensions might be a problem.

**Programme management.** The high quality of the SAR as well as the organisation and the structure of the visit, attest to a very competent management and a well-run department. The programme management is transparent and very competent. The various responsibilities are clearly allocated and the system is characterised by a relatively small distance, which means that many issues are solved in an ongoing and informal fashion. This is a quality that is closely linked to the impression of a department that functions as a team focused on common goals. Such a tightly-knit culture could, however, be in need of a more structured implementation of the formal rules of governance. There is a strong focus on quality control. Market surveys, however, are not carried out regularly.

Linked to the integrated culture of the department, it should also be pointed out that the two programmes — integrated communications, and journalism and media analysis — are based on a (partially) overlapping group of teachers, cater to the same students as well as to overlapping job types. A clearer distinction of these programmes could be considered.

All in all, the Journalism and Media Analysis master at VMU presents itself — both in the self-assessment report and in actual meetings — as a high-quality programme with high ambitions as well as the ability to develop in relation to a changing environment.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Journalism and Media Analysis* (state code – 621P50002) of Vytautas Magnus University is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>

\*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:

Peter C. Neijens

Grupės nariai:

Team members:

Ullamaija Kivikuru

Henrik Bødker

Artūras Jonkus

Simonas Kabašinskas

**VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS  
ŽURNALISTIKA IR MEDIJŲ ANALIZĖ (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621P50002)  
2013-02-06 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-48 IŠRAŠAS**

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

- 3.1. Nors numatomi studijų rezultatai gerai suformuluoti, reikėtų atkreipti didesnę dėmesį į tai, kaip susiję įvairūs studijų rezultatai ir kaip jie išdėstyti, kad sudarytų integruotą visumą.
- 3.2. Studijų programos komiteto procedūros turi būti sistemingesnės ir skaidresnės.
- 3.3. Rekomenduojama stebėti studentus su kitokiu įgytu išsilavinimu ir, pastebėjus studijų rezultatų skirtumų, įvesti privalomas papildomas studijas.
- 3.4. Reikėtų peržiūrėti pirmojo ir antrojo kursų studijų dalykų tvarką ir išdėstyti kontekstinius pirmojo semestro dalykus po praktinių dalykų. Tačiau į praktinių dalykų turinį taip pat reikėtų įtraukti teorinius elementus, kaip nurodyta dabartinėje programoje.
- 3.5. Atskirų dalykų ir baigiamųjų darbų vertinimo kriterijai turėtų būti aiškesni. Taip pat turėtų būti peržiūrėtos plagijavimo prevencijos procedūros.
- 3.6. Programa turėtų labiau pasitelkti socialinius partnerius, ypač dėl jų deklaruojamo noro ar netgi troškimo bendradarbiauti. Rekomenduojama atlikti rinkos tyrimus.
- 3.7. Reikėtų peržiūrėti atskirų dalykų apimtį, atsižvelgiant į galimybę planuoti programą pagal modulių struktūrą, taip pat formuojant didesnius komponentus, kurie leidžia keisti dalykų apimtį, o tai ypač reikalinga daugiau į praktiką orientuotiems dalykams.
- 3.8. Turėdama kvalifikuotus dėstytojus ir vykdydama dvi aukštos kokybės magistrantūros studijų programas, katedra turėtų apsvarstyti galimybę įvesti komunikacijos ir medijų mokslo srities doktorantūros studijų programą.

IV. SANTRAUKA

**Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai.** Šioje programoje žurnalistika ir medijos studijuojamos labai plačiame kontekste, apimančiame politinius, sociologinius ir filosofinius aspektus. Žurnalistikos švietimo aspektu ši programa yra iš tiesų gana unikali.

Programa kruopščiai apgalvota ir ambicinga, tačiau jos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai išlieka labai platūs, jiems trūksta aiškios orientacijos. Programa turi ambicingus akademinis tikslus. Vis dėlto abejotina, ar ji suteikia tokį profesinį išsilavinimą, kokio pageidauja šalies komercinė medijų industrija.

Žurnalistikos programose sunku sureguliuoti teorijos ir praktikos santykį. Ši programa parodo problemas, kurios iškyla, kai profesiniai ir į tyrimus orientuoti tikslai yra lygiagretūs. Kontekstas, neabejotinai, yra svarbus, tačiau daugybė teoriškai svarbių aspektų šioje programoje prislopina gilų,

analitinį požiūrį į žurnalistikos profesionalumą. Kai kuriuos studijų rezultatus (pvz., 1.1 ir 1.2) gali būti sunku pasiekti vienu metu.

Tai, kad anglų kalba yra pagrindinė šios programos dėstymo kalba, gali būti ginčytina, nes programa teikia profesinį žurnalistinį išsilavinimą. Žurnalistika grindžiama kvalifikuotu ir diversifikuotu kalbos, kurią naudoja tos visuomenės medijos, mokymu.

Be šios programos, katedra vykdo dar vieną magistrantūros studijų programą. Abi programos sutelktos į komunikacijos aspektus ir jas dėsto tie patys dėstytojai. Remiantis pateiktais dokumentais, jos pritraukia tuos pačius studentus, kurie po baigimo įsidarbina to paties tipo darbuose. Reikėtų apsvarstyti galimybes dėl programų skirtingo profilio.

**Programos sandara.** Programa atitinka visus teisinius magistrantūros studijų pakopos reikalavimus. Programoje išskirtinai pabrėžiamas teorinis aspektas. Tik mažiau nei vieną trečdalį programos apimties sudaro į praktinius aspektus orientuoti dalykai. Vertėtų peržiūrėti dalykų struktūrą. Kai kurie labai bendri ir sunkūs pirmojo kurso dalykai galėtų būti perkelti į antruosius studijų metus, į praktinius dalykus turėtų būti įtraukti ir teoriniai elementai, taip didinant atskirai dėstomų dalykų vientisumą. Visų dalykų (išskyrus magistrantūros tezes) skirstymas į 6 ECTS kreditų apimties dalykus turėtų būti persvarstytas atsižvelgiant į tai, kad kiekvienas dalykas turėtų būti integruotos visumos dalis. Labiau į praktiką orientuoti dalykai reikalauja didesnės apimties, o kai kurie pasirenkamieji dalykai galėtų būti žymiai mažesni. Kita galimybė būtų pereiti prie modulių sistemos su keliais vidine sandara atitinkančiais dalykais.

Dalykų aprašai ir literatūra rodo, kad gerai susipažinta su naujausiomis vyraujančiomis srities tendencijomis. Savianalizės suvestinėje ir jos prieduose pateikiamas išsamus dalykų įgyvendinimo aprašymas. Tačiau kai kurie aspektai, pvz., literatūros naudojimas, lieka neaiškūs.

**Personalas.** Dėstytojų ir mokslininkų kokybė ir sąlygos atitinka studijų programą, studijų rezultatus ir studentų skaičių. Infrastruktūra dėstymo ir mokslinių tyrimų kokybei nuolat didinti bei moksliniams tyrimams, susietiems su dėstymu atlikti, yra gera.

Daugumą dalykų (80 proc.) dėsto nuolatiniai dėstytojai, kurių dėstomi dalykai atitinka jų vykdomus mokslinius tyrimus. Dauguma dėstytojų aktyviai vykdo tyrimus ir skelbia savo darbus tiek Lietuvoje, tiek užsienyje. Kviestiniai dėstytojai nėra visiškai įsilieję į programą.

**Materialieji ištekliai.** Nedidelis dėstytojų ir studentų skaičiaus santykis, nedideliu atstumu išdėstytos administracijos patalpos, bendrosios poilsio zonos ir auditorijos užtikrina kasdienę studentų ir dėstytojų sąveiką. Auditorijos, darbo grupėse patalpos ir elektroniniai ištekliai yra prieinami, tačiau yra problemų dėl literatūros. Neseniai VDU atidarė žinių skyrių su radijo ir internetinės TV studijomis, skirtą darbui grupėse ir praktiniams magistrantūros studentų užsiėmimams. Radijo ir TV studijos yra paprastos, tačiau veikiančios. Universitetas šiuo metu laukia daugiau įrangos. Tačiau ši materialinė bazė bus naudojama viso universiteto praktinio mokymo reikmėms ir darbui grupėse.

Viena iš problemų, susijusių su praktiniam žurnalistų mokymui skirtomis patalpomis, yra ta, kad šis darbas iš dalies sujungtas su VDU viešinimo veikla. Tai yra svarbi sritis, tačiau tai, kad studentai praktinių dalykų metu dirba kaip universiteto ryšių su visuomene atstovai, gali kelti profesinį prieštaravimą.

**Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas.** Studijų aplinka yra palanki, nors atskirų dalykų studentų darbo vertinimo kriterijai išlieka šiek tiek neaiškūs. Vis dėlto reguliariai rengiamos studentų apklausos, jų nuomonė išklausoma diskusijų užsiėmimuose metu. Tarpinis semestro vidurio vertinimas yra puiki priemonė.

Baigiamojo darbo apimtis yra tinkama, tačiau kreditų už rašto darbą ir žodinį gynimą santykis lieka neaiškūs.

Sėkmingas programos baigimas gali labai priklausyti nuo ankstesnio išsilavinimo, t. y. bakalauro studijų srities. Jei studentas įgijęs visiškai skirtingos disciplinos bakalauro laipsnį, jo(s)

galimybės tinkamai įsisavinti daug laiko ir pastangų reikalaujančius kontekstinius aspektus gali būti problematiškos.

**Programos vadyba.** Aukšta savianalizės suvestinės kokybė, taip pat vizito organizavimas ir struktūra liudija labai kompetentingą vadybą ir puikiai dirbančią katedrą. Programos vadyba skaidri ir labai kompetentinga. Atsakomybė aiškiai paskirstyta, o sistema santykinai nelabai oficiali, – tai reiškia, kad daugelis klausimų sprendžiami iš karto ir neoficialiai. Ši savybė sudaro įspūdį, kad katedra veikia kaip komanda bendriam tikslams pasiekti. Vis dėlto tokiai glaudžiai kultūrai gali prireikti labiau struktūruoto formalių vadybos taisyklių įgyvendinimo. Didelis dėmesys skiriamas kokybės kontrolei. Tačiau rinkos tyrimai atliekami nereguliariai.

Kalbant apie integruotą katedros kultūrą, reikėtų paminėti, kad abi programos – Integruota komunikacija ir Žurnalistika ir medijų analizė – remiasi tais pačiais dėstytojais, yra skirtos tiems patiems studentams bei orientuotos į tą patį darbo pobūdį. Reikėtų apvarstyti aiškesnę šių programų atskyrimą.

Apskritai, VDU Žurnalistikos ir medijų analizės magistrantūros studijų programa tiek iš savianalizės suvestinės, tiek iš realių vizitų į universitetą sudaro aukštos kokybės programos su dideliais siekiais ir gebėjimu tobulėti atsižvelgiant į besikeičiančias aplinkybes įspūdį.

#### IV. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vytauto Didžiojo studijų programa *Žurnalistika ir medijų analizė* (valstybinis kodas – 612P50002) vertinama teigiamai.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	4
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>

\* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

Team leader:

Grupės vadovas: Peter C. Neijens, PhD

Team members: Henrik Bodker, PhD

Grupės nariai: Artūras Jonkus, MSc

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