



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
BALTIJOS REGIONO STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
(621L20006) VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *BALTIC REGION STUDIES* (621L20006)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vytautas Magnus University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Baltijos regiono studijos</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621L20006
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Politikos mokslai
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės (2 metai)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Politikos mokslų magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2004 03 01 (2006 04 04)

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Baltic Region Studies</i>
State code	621L20006
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	Political sciences
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (2 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Political Sciences
Date of registration of the study programme	01 03 2004 (04 04 2006)

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
I. INTRODUCTION.....	4
II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS	4
1. Programme aims and learning outcomes.....	4
2. Curriculum design	6
3. Staff	8
4. Facilities and learning resources	9
5. Study process and student assessment.....	9
6. Programme management	11
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	15
IV. SUMMARY	17
V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT	18

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Baltic Region Studies MA Program* is taught at Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter VMU) at the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy (with the Department of Regional Studies as its integral part) as an English language program and has been since 2004. In the beginning, it was conceived as a part of Baltic Studies Programs offered by a consortium of universities in Tartu, Riga and Turku with a common MA degree. Cooperation also existed with universities in Gdansk, Copenhagen and Humboldt University. The first program modifications at VMU were introduced already in 2006 and after a first program evaluation by international experts in 2007, which put more emphasis on research skills and on the MA thesis. New program elements that aimed at teaching more practical skills were introduced in 2012, but have not been fully implemented until now.

Currently, 7 to 10 students are enrolled in each year of the MA program. Although the program is not only directed to Lithuanian students, but shall in particular include foreign students, there are - apart from incoming ERASMUS students - no foreign students enrolled on the program at the moment.

The evaluation team, lead by Prof. dr. Jörg Hackman, Professor of East European History at the University of Szczecin, Poland, consisted of Prof. dr. Aleksandras Dobryninas, Professor of Sociology at Vilnius University, Prof. Dr. Joakim Enwall, Professor of Chinese Language and Culture at Uppsala University, Prof. dr. Irmina Matonytė, Professor of Political Sciences of the ISM University of Management and Economy and Mr. Matthew Kitching, Membership Services Manager – Bucks Students' Union, United Kingdom (student representative). The team visited VMU on November 12-14, 2013, and met with representatives of the self-evaluation team for the Baltic Region Studies programme at VMU, administration, teachers, students, alumni and social partners etc.

II. PROGRAM ANALYSIS

1. Program aims and learning outcomes

The discussions at the site visit clearly revealed that the program is currently under revision, therefore program aims and learning outcomes described in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) are obviously partly outdated. Against this background the evaluation team came to the conclusion that the program indeed needs improvement.

Referring to materials submitted, the program aims and learning outcomes are formally well defined, clear and publicly accessible according to the materials provided. They are first of all based on academic requirements and public needs, but less focused on the labour market beyond academia and public service. The program has a strong background in VMU's mission and goals to contribute to "internationalization of studies and research, promotion of interdisciplinary approaches and intercultural understanding" (as stated in the SER, p. 4). Apart from that, it may be stated that there is also an interest in a Baltic Region Studies program by the public and civil society, in particular.

The program aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of the studies offered. The MA program builds up on the BA program in International Politics and Development Studies taught at the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy of VMU. For students with a BA degree in subjects other than Political Science, individual (paid) supplementary courses are offered. The Baltic Region Studies program is based on a multidisciplinary approach with a strong focus of combining historical contemporary political and economic analysis.

The name of the program, its contents and the qualifications offered are largely compatible with each other. However, three critical issues shall be addressed here in more detail:

First, there is a partial inconsistency in the program's name that stems from the fluid semantics of Baltics. Partly it is referred to as Baltic Sea Region, partly as Northern Europe, partly as Baltic and Nordic regions. According to the academic staff, the new focus should be on the three Baltic and the Nordic states as well as on the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. So far, however, there seems to be no lucid vision as to whether the focus should be expanded to "Northern Europe", "Baltic Sea Region" or some other geographical-political-cultural variation. In response to the draft of the SER, the Study Committee states that "Northern Europe, in this regard, encompasses the Baltic states, the Nordic countries, the Baltic sea area and Russia's relation to the region". This multiplicity of terms, however, in our opinion rather enhances than dissolves possible misunderstandings.

Second, the languages taught in the program are not fully consistent with the spatial scope, no matter what will be future spatial scope of the program, languages offered should be in accordance. Apart from Scandinavian languages and German, which are offered at the moment, Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Russian, and Polish should be included in the program, as far as possible. The argument brought forward in the discussion that Russian, if offered, would open an easy way for Russian speaking students to avoid learning further languages did not convince the evaluation team. Instead, it has the opinion that the Baltic Sea Region language courses and

courses of academic writing in language X (Russian included) might be very appropriate in this particular MA study program.

A third inconsistency, which might be overcome in the ongoing program revision, may be identified in partly contradicting focuses of the program: on the one hand the program intends to increase students' mobility and shall be attractive for incoming foreign students (however, there are no international students who study the full program at the moment) and thus teach them (among other subjects) the Lithuanian place in the Baltic Sea region. On the other hand, the program intends to educate more Lithuanian experts of the Nordic region, which implies learning subjects that are not primarily focused on Lithuania, but on the other Baltic Sea states. E.g., it seems to be difficult to attract Danish or Swedish students, if the focus of the program will be mainly on the Nordic states.

2. Curriculum design

The curriculum design meets the legal requirements for a MA program (120 ECTS points, 30 of them dedicated to the MA thesis), and the content of the subjects and modules is largely consistent with type and level of the studies program. Compulsory courses (9 out of 13) comprise topics from political science, history and economy. Besides, the program includes four elective courses (one of them as "special course" could include foreign visiting scholars), an internship, a research project and the MA thesis. Compulsory courses are comprised of:

- Russia, Baltic Countries and Western Europe: Historical Confines and Geopolitical Perspectives
- Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area
- Regions Evolution in the International System
- Political Systems of the Baltic and Nordic States
- National Social Movements in Baltic Region and Central East Europe
- Security in the Baltic Sea Region
- Baltic Sea Region in the European Union
- Economic Development in the Baltic Sea Region
- Post-communist Transformations in the Baltic States

Although one might discuss some of the titles ("National Social Movements in Baltic Region and Central East Europe" should be "Social Movements in the Baltic Region and East Central Europe"), contents and methods of the subjects are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. During the visit, however, it was discussed, whether some of the

compulsory courses could be offered as elective courses and instead language courses be made compulsory as well as a (new) course on social research methods as preparation for the MA thesis.

Nevertheless, the scope of the program is sufficient to ensure the learning outcomes. The range of courses offered provides a sound basis for the writing of a master thesis as an independent scientific project. However, it seems that the students' ability to develop interdisciplinary master projects and to write their thesis in English could be improved.

The contents of the program widely reflects the latest scholarly achievements, but the evaluation team see a partial lack of discussion when it comes to theoretical concepts, and of implementing reflection on area studies and constructivism in social sciences. At least there seem to be discrepancies in the approach towards geopolitics (see e.g. in the course "Russia, Baltic Countries and Western Europe"). The students' interest in putting more emphasis on practical skills has been regarded in recent program changes, but progress in implementing internships managed by the department is rather slow.

Critical remarks concerning the curriculum refer first to an inconsistency in the offered language courses. As none of the language courses is compulsory, one might ask whether the students will achieve "sufficient writing and communication skills in one of the languages of Northern Europe" (SER, p. 7). Besides, there seems to be no convincing argument, as to why not Russian, Latvian or a Finno-Ugric language could not be chosen.

A second problem may be identified in the writing of the MA thesis. As this can be (and – according to the theses checked during the site visit – is mainly) done in Lithuanian, it does not fit to the other parts of the curriculum. Furthermore, it seems that supervision of master theses could be improved by introducing a master seminar for instance, where students present their proceeding studies.

According to the SER (p. 12) the studies program is constantly updated and shall be changed in future to include also Germany and to intensify cooperation with "European and American universities". From the materials provided, however, it has not become clear, how the inclusion of current developments is reflected in the course descriptions. If one looks at literature provided in the course descriptions, it seems that some courses have not been updated in the last few years: from the compulsory courses only two and from the elective courses three (out of ten) list literature from the last three years. At least one course lists among the basic literature only titles in Lithuanian.

Another point refers to the inclusion of topics related to Russia. Such issues appear at many places within the program, but are not sufficiently reflected in the spatial notion of the program. Rather, one may get the impression that the concept of Baltic Region studies is based on the othering of Russia.

3. Staff

The staff members that teach on the Baltic Region Studies program meets the legal requirements, and the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure the learning outcomes. There are annual assessments comprising scholarly achievements as well as teaching and further duties. Some of the faculty members also have experiences of working as national policy advisers, which is obviously very useful for the practical component of the studies program, and might be purposefully employed in developing ties with the social partners.

The Department of Regional Studies has four full-time and five part-time teachers for two MA programs. Apart from that, elective courses may be taken from other departments. According to the self-evaluation report, the Baltic Studies program involves 3 professors, 4 associate and 6 assistant professors, which is adequate to run the program. It is also foreseen that foreign visiting scholars teach in the program. Although there have been visiting professors in the past, at the time of the evaluation there weren't any. In addition, language courses are arranged by the Center of Foreign Languages of VMU.

The recent staff turnover is based on the transition of the studies program described above. The team had the impression that prof. dr. Mindaugas Jurkynas as newly appointed head of the Baltic Region Studies program has not yet fully taken responsibility and ownership of the program. Furthermore, there are teaching exchanges with invitations of foreign scholars to VMU and teaching of the staff of the Baltic Studies program at international institutions, although exchange is hampered at the moment by the changes within the international cooperation in the field of Baltic Studies.

VMU provides relatively good conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff, as many of them advanced in their qualifications during the past five years. Furthermore, the teaching staff are involved in research directly related to the study program. Nevertheless, the general teaching workload seems to be relatively high (12-18 hours/week), which limits the staff's research ambitions and opportunities.

4. Facilities and learning resources

The premises for studies and learning at VMU are adequate both in size and quality. Students have sufficient space for self-learning and working groups. The lecture halls at the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy as well as the central buildings of the University are in a good shape and well equipped. The University Library also offers space for working groups, but it seems that the space in the reading rooms was rather limited. The facilities for language learning were not inspected by the evaluation team, as language courses in this program are provided by other branches of VMU.

In general, library facilities are sufficient for the successful implementation of the study program. They provide periodicals in print and electronic format, basic textbooks and access to databases. Regarding research literature and library resources, however, the SER states a lack of copies of relevant textbooks (at the University Library as well as at the Department of Regional Studies). The amount of available research literature in different languages of the Baltic Sea Region is limited as well and should definitely be improved. As with many other universities, VMU seemingly tries to compensate this deficit with a broad access to online databases, which allow the students to read research literature (in English, first of all) and to get access to relevant sources. The meeting of the evaluation team with the students, however, raised the question, how competent the students of this particular MA program are to use efficiently the academic databases. Therefore, the evaluation team, nevertheless, wants to stress the necessity of making students familiar with reading books and not only compiling materials from online databases. Finally, it seems that the program leadership and staff underestimates the opportunities provided by the e-learning system and does not take full advantage of the ICTs.

5. Study process and student assessment

The admission requirements are well-founded in demanding a BA in social sciences or humanities and a good command of English. The number of student applications has however significantly declined during the last few years, from 51 in 2008 to 20 in 2011. The self evaluation team were clear that recruitment is a challenge and student numbers may potentially continue to drop in future due to reductions in state funding and the difficult economic climate in Lithuania. The University is taking several steps to address this including the establishment of offices abroad and advertising the course within the region and through established networks. The evaluation team acknowledge this and the continued work at program level to support recruitment as important activity. However, a more targeted approach to promoting the program

amongst social partners, with a view to recruiting their existing staff may also be beneficial. The students' dropout rate, nevertheless, is low.

The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the program and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Courses are usually offered in the afternoon, based on the fact that MA students usually work during the day in order to earn money. Students were aware about the support arrangements available, including financial support, although very few had needed to access this and, in terms of financial support, were utilising income generated from parents, employment and their own businesses to fund their studies. Students felt well supported and were very keen to impress on the team that they valued the openness of staff and the fact they were regularly accessible.

Students are, after the changes implemented in 2007, encouraged to participate in research activities. They also have opportunities to participate in student mobility programs: 2 to 4 students per year (out of a total of 7-10) have made use of exchange programs. Graduates reported that they had accessed a range of mobility opportunities in Latvia and Finland amongst other countries. Current students, however, appeared to not have been as able to participate in mobility activity as their predecessors. This can somewhat be attributed to the increased shift towards part time student status and students having increased external commitments as a consequence.

Students recognise that mobility is really beneficial, both those who have and haven't been. Though mobility programs are for one semester or one year and as the intake has moved from largely full time to part time it is proving difficult for students to take up the opportunity. The team therefore agreed that as well as looking at the number of international partnerships it may be helpful for the university to think creatively about the length of mobility opportunities to enable more students to benefit.

Student involvement in research and projects was less developed, although a clear desire on the part of both staff and students to develop this area of their work was demonstrable at the review visit itself. Students cited time as a constraint in achieving this, but wanted to engage positively in supporting staff research and other activities.

A significant number of graduates are employed in roles with employers that are directly related to the field of study. This includes jobs as tour guides, youth coordinators with a municipality and for a private distribution firm who operate throughout the Baltic region. Students spoke highly of the benefit and skills the program had imparted and the impact this had on their employment. The professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the program providers' expectations.

Internships were introduced only in 2013, and so far, there are only preliminary experiences that do not allow a definite judgement. Contacts with social partners exist, but it is not clear to what degree they are meaningfully involved in providing, supervising, mentoring and shaping the internships.

The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. Students were very clear about what they needed to do to succeed and about their assessment schedule. Students without a basis in international relations are required to undertake additional modules, which they must pay for independently. This appeared to pose no problems for students all of whom were made aware of this requirement at the application stage. Detailed data on the results of the program (except for MA theses grades from 2012/2013) were not available.

6. Programme management

The program was introduced in 2004 and was already evaluated by the international experts in 2007. As was stated in the SER and on the site visit, the leadership of the program has changed in the meantime, and the composition of the staff complement has been altered, too. Presumably, several recommendations of the 2007 evaluation report have been taken into consideration at the Department of Regional Studies, responsible for the program, yet the pace and scope of improvements is not very spectacular. In particular, the belated (and still clearly non-articulated) introduction of internships shall be institutionalised only in 2014. The 2007 expert explicit advice to better integrate the economic dimension and methodological studies into the study program and the resulting MA thesis topics is met only with partial success, and the current program leadership does not intend to develop any further the "economic dimension" of the program.

There was a certain malaise, transmitted by the lecturers, students and social partners of the program regarding its prospects in the academic and the labour market both in Lithuania and abroad.

The assessment of the studies program is based on an "evaluation process and methodological guidelines approved by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, and recommendations prepared by the Centre of Quality and Innovations at VMU." (SER, p. 6) However, it is not clear what this means in reality. The role of the Centre for Quality and Innovations (CQI), responsible for supervision and maintenance of the VMU Internal Quality Assurance System is particularly interesting. As stated in the SER, the mission of the Centre refers to both (a) the development of University internal quality assurance system (procedures

and mechanisms) which considers the tendencies of European Higher Education Quality culture development, and (b) counselling institutional academic personnel (faculty members, institutional administrators, program managers) on quality assurance issues. Yet, the site visit and discussions with the representatives of the program reveal that the CQI is mostly a top-down supervising body, offering little practical, tailor-made help for this and other MA study programs.

Students appeared to be uncertain about their membership and the role within the Study Program Committee. Whilst they are broadly speaking very happy with their learning experience, the evaluation team came to the view that there is the potential to enhance programs even further if you involve students more systematically and formally in reflection over the programs. This can be both at formal committees but also through continued informal discussion and regular participation in questionnaires, module feedback and surveys.

In operational terms, students have the opportunity to review the quality of the courses every semester and, when graduating the degree program, through anonymous questionnaires. The central office of the VMU Centre for Quality and Innovations (CQI) administers this process of supervision and feedback. Evidently, structured feedback from the students is important, but it is only one source of evaluative information (especially, when the number of students is small and even smaller is the number of the students who care to fill in the questionnaires). Results of the students' assessment of the program, however, were not available. According to the staff informal assessment prevails, which seems to be reasonable with regard to the small numbers of students, but it is not working in case of complaints. There was no detailed information available about the effects of the students' assessment. The same has to be said about efficiency and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance measures.

Peer-feedback from colleagues in the same or different departments of the VMU (or other partner universities) would provide another source of valuable information. Yet, this practice does not seem attractive to the leadership of the program (peer feedback as a tool for improvement in the quality of the Baltic region program was recommended in 2007).

As any sound internal quality assurance system requires co-operation between all levels of university administration, the structure of the system seems to be very complex and poorly articulated into a meaningful instrument. The existing system is mostly driven by bureaucratic control, and does not include a well-reasoned structure of incentives and feedback on all levels. Interviews conducted during the site-visit did not convince the evaluation team that good teachers would be systematically rewarded for their input and results in developing teaching and student-oriented activities. VMU attention is disproportionately given to incentivising successful

researchers, whose academic production not necessarily contributes to the knowledge in the field of the Baltic region, i.e. university valorises publications “on whatever subject” as long as a publication is in a prestigious academic journal, no special incentives are provided for publications related to the expertise in the Baltic region.

The Department of Regional Studies at VMU is pretty active in external relations, including on the international level. ERASMUS program facilitated exchange of students and instructors is certainly adequate and justified. Yet, more common projects in the framework of the EU and other internationally funded programs would certainly provide better opportunity to acquire experience, to train staff, and develop courses and teaching methods.

The Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy has succeeded in creating a network of social partners: some social partners participate in MA thesis defence committees; meetings of graduates from different classes are organized annually; statistical information on employment of the graduates is being collected. Yet, these potential avenues of feedback on the program are not much utilized in the development of the program. In general, students, social partners and employers do not seem to have sufficient information about the outcomes that the analysis of their feedback leads to.

As lecturers, present in the discussions with the evaluation team, admit, the program now is in decline (in terms of the number of students and in terms of potential students’ interest to enrol): The international cooperation mentioned above faded away, it did not disappear completely, but most of it happens individually through ERASMUS based exchange of students, as the mentioned universities have rather similar curricula and student mobility is pretty intensive. Also, lecturers underline that there is little of the institutional memory preserved: people who created this study program work in other programs (of the VMU) and new people, first of all the new head of the program, prof. dr. M. Jurkynas, are trying to revise the program. The head of the Department of Regional Studies, prof. dr. Egdūnas Račius, does not hide that this program is not “his cup of tea”, as he is genuinely interested in Muslim region studies. Yet, as an experienced and charismatic professor, E. Račius enthusiastically supports the program, especially as a lecturer (of optional courses, during the meeting with the evaluation team it was mentioned that prof. Račius teaches a course on Orientalism).

The program leaders explain that VMU does not have sufficient expertise of the region (in particular, on Latvia or Estonia) from the political point of view, but there is desire to have more of such expertise. As to experts (let it be philologists) of Nordic politics and cultures the program leaders explain their lack in the program by the “structural reason”, i.e. the VMU has a BA

programme on Cultures of the Baltic region at the VMU Faculty of Humanities. The program leaders also complain that in the University there is sometimes too much administrative control. This is, for instance, reflected in the rigid structure of courses taught: the small amount of electives courses results from the intention to manage lecturers' workloads without additional costs. The Baltic Region Studies program faces some shortcomings due to limitations in its staff own research (heavy teaching workloads) and little institutional support to the lecturers' participation in research projects and attempts to internationally showcase research achievements. As for the social partners, the program evidently needs to better develop and market its network. The idea to develop more tight cooperation with the diplomatic organisations, residing in the Baltic region (in the broad sense), is still in the air.

Basic features of the program management of the Baltic Region Studies might be summarized as follows:

- Due to regional academic market development and shifts in geo-political regionalization, the conceptual framework of the program is under revision, there is much uncertainty in terms of the program vision (geographical and methodological);
- the structure of decision-making and implementation of the program on the level of VMU is cumbersome, although the program leaders do not see a problem here;
- the collection of information and data on the implementation of the program is designed and administered by one central office of the University (CQI) and it creates little value for this particular MA program, which practices its own "self-assessment" forms, much less formalized and much more driven by individual lecturers, who are not necessarily in the core-team of the program;
- cooperation with the social partners is shallow, even in the situation of newly introduced obligatory internships, the program administration does not mobilize its accumulated (from the previously much more vigorously administered program) networks and partners, but leaves the search and experience of internships mainly as an individual students' responsibility;
- stakeholders of the program are by no means not systematically and only to a small degree involved into the process of implementation, evaluation and adaptation of the program;
- quality assurance measures, when their efficiency and effectiveness is measured by student-centred indicators, are fairly satisfactory; they are less effective if assessed in a labour-market-centred way, but they are pretty productive if evaluated from the stand-point of civil-society at large (critical and creative thinking, broad humanistic knowledge and interest, language competences, etc. of lecturers, students and their audiences).

The complexity of the structure of decision-making and implementation of the program is underscored in the SER and was further highlighted during the site visit. For instance, at some point, the evaluation team discussed with the program administrators the role(s) of the VMU students' representatives and University library in the design of the study program (the two instances were mentioned in the SER, p. 32).

From the point of view of management, it means to ensure the quality of the program requires first more systematic steps involving the academic community and social partners in the revision of the study program and its outreach activities, and second more efforts to enrol students from abroad in order to create a truly international (Baltic regional) atmosphere congenial with the conceptual vision of the program.

In general, the study program is managed "satisfactorily", yet there is ample room for improvement. The program attains its major study goals and its practices of quality assurance are fairly functional. Yet, the (new) program leadership has to assume "ownership" of the program to greater extent and aim for more innovative and better orchestration of its decision-making and development. Cooperation with alumni, social partners and potential employers in the study process should be better structured and oriented towards more concrete goals.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The notion of the "Baltic" region should be thoroughly defined and the scope broadened towards Baltic Sea Region Studies (or Baltic and North European Studies).
2. In order to secure a sufficient number of students, the program should be modified with focuses on attracting international students and offering a modern approach towards area studies.
3. The program should be better integrated a) into the academic community on national and international levels with special regard to the Baltic Sea region, and b) into civil society (in particular, develop more research cooperation with the BSR study programs abroad and with the relevant *think tanks* world-wide).
4. Quality of master theses should be improved regarding methodology, a topical focus beyond Lithuania, and language skills.
5. Interaction with social partners in the program should be fundamentally improved and expanded.

6. Develop and institutionalize a system of internships, based on ownership and responsibility by the Department of Regional Studies (internship placements and professional communication with mentors).
7. Consider more multi-faceted students feedback mechanisms and stronger orientation of the programs towards their clients (students, stakeholders, social partners and potential employers).
8. Library holding should be improved in order to provide the (international) research literature for the program.

IV. SUMMARY

There is a broad political, public and scholarly interest in offering a Baltic Region Studies program on the national as well as on the international level. In addition, the program offers promising possibilities for developing a contemporary and innovative approach towards area studies. The teaching staff is dynamic, highly qualified and has fresh ideas on the program development. The program aims and learning outcomes are generally clearly defined and well-founded, however, the theoretical and practical focus on Baltic area studies could be sharpened. The evaluation team argues for broadening the scope towards the Baltic Sea region.

The program curriculum design has seen several major changes, the current form provides (or rather: presumably will provide) a balanced set of research and practical subjects. The range of language courses, however, should be broadened and they should receive a stronger position within the studies program. Further attention should also be given to the improvement of the MA theses with regard to research methodology and topics as well as to language. Facilities and learning resources – premises and equipment – are of high standard, but library resources – textbooks and research literature – need to be improved.

All in all, the Baltic Region Studies program is situated in a changing international field, and in addition it is under construction at VMU. This makes it difficult to evaluate it in an appropriate way. Restabilising cooperation with similar programs in the Baltic Sea region would be highly desirable. Major recommendations concerning the program at VMU refer to:

- a) clarifying and potentially broadening the spatial scope of the program and to integrate it in modern concepts of area studies;
- b) putting more emphasis on attracting international full time students (which is related to the aforementioned point);
- c) improving the quality of MA theses by putting more emphasis on research methodology and supervision;
- d) developing institutionalized cooperation with national and international stakeholders (governmental institutions, civil society).

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Baltic Region Studies* (state code – 621L20006) at 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	2
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	2
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	2
	Total:	15

*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.

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**VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ
PROGRAMOS *BALTIJOS REGIONO STUDIJOS* (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621L20006)
2014-02-17 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-73 IŠRAŠAS**

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto studijų programa *Baltijos regiono studijos* (valstybinis kodas – 621L20006) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	2
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	Iš viso:	15

* 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)

<...>

IV. SANTRAUKA

Politiniai sluoksniai, visuomenė ir akademinė bendruomenė yra suinteresuota, kad Baltijos regiono studijų programa būtų siūloma tiek nacionaliniu, tiek tarptautiniu lygiu. Be to, tokia programa sutiekia puikių galimybių tyrinėti šių studijų sritis šiuolaikiškai ir naujoviškai. Programos dalykus dėsto aukštos kvalifikacijos ir energingi dėstytojai, turintys nemažai originalių minčių apie tolesnę programos plėtrą. Apskritai, programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai yra aiškiai apibrėžti ir tinkamai pagrįsti, tačiau labiau turėtų būti išryškinti teoriniai ir praktiniai Baltijos regiono studijų aspektai. Ekspertų grupė siūlo praplėsti programos tematiką iki Baltijos jūros regiono studijų.

Studijų turinys jau kelis kartus buvo keistas, dabartinė jo struktūra užtikrina (tiksliau, tikimasi, kad užtikrins) geresnę tiriamojo pobūdžio ir praktinių dalykų pusiausvyrą. Vis dėlto turėtų būti pasiūlyta įvairesnių kalbos dalykų, kuriems studijų programoje turėtų būti skiriama daugiau valandų. Taip pat reikėtų gerinti magistro baigiamųjų darbų kokybę jų tyrimų metodologijos, tematikos ir kalbos požiūriu. Tokia materialioji bazė ir metodiniai ištekliai, kaip patalpos ir įranga, yra aukštos kokybės, tačiau bibliotekos ištekliai turėtų būti papildyti reikalingais vadovėliais ir mokslo tiriamaisiais darbais.

Apskritai, Baltijos regiono studijų programa įgyvendinama besikeičiančioje tarptautinėje aplinkoje, be to, tokia programa kuriama ir VDU. Dėl šių priežasčių ją sunku tinkamai įvertinti. Rekomenduojama siekti atkurti ir stiprinti ryšius su panašiomis programomis Baltijos jūros regione. Pagrindinės su VDU vykdomai programai teikiamos rekomendacijos:

- a) aiškiau apibrėžti ir praplėsti programos erdvinę apimtį ir integruoti į programą naujausius studijų šioje srityje pasiekimus.
- b) stiprinti pastangas į nuolatinės studijas pritraukti tarptautinius studentus (tai susiję su pirmiau pateiktomis rekomendacijomis);
- c) gerinti magistro baigiamųjų darbų kokybę daugiau dėmesio skiriant tiriamųjų darbų metodologijai ir vadovavimui magistro darbams;
- d) plėtoti bendradarbiavimą su šalies ir tarptautinių suinteresuotų šalių institucijomis (vyriausybės institucijomis, pilietine visuomene).

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

- a. Sąvoka „Baltijos regionas“ turėtų būti aiškiai apibrėžta, o programos tematika turėtų būti praplėsta ir apimti Baltijos jūros regiono studijas (arba Baltijos ir Šiaurės Europos studijas).
- b. Norint užtikrinti pakankamą studentų skaičių, programa turėtų būti reformuota stengiantis pritraukti tarptautinius studentus ir pasiūlius šiuolaikišką požiūrį į šios srities studijas.
- c. Programa turėtų būti glaudžiau siejama su: 1) šalies ir tarptautine akademinė bendruomene, specialiai besidominčia Baltijos jūros regiono tematika, b) pilietine visuomene (ypač plėtoti bendradarbiavimą tyrimų srityje su Baltijos jūros regiono studijų programomis užsienyje ir atitinkamomis „idėjų kalvėmis“ visame pasaulyje).
- d. Turėtų būtų gerinama magistro baigiamųjų darbų kokybė – tiek metodologijos požiūriu, tiek pasirenkant ne tik su Lietuva susijusias temas, tobulinant kalbos įgūdžius.
- e. Programos sąveika su socialiniais partneriais turėtų būti iš esmės tobulinama ir plečiama.
- f. Plėtoti ir formalizuoti studentų praktikų sistemą, už kurią turėtų būti atsakinga

Regioninių studijų katedra (tiek siunčiant studentus atlikti praktiką, tiek palaikant profesinius ryšius su praktikos vadovais).

g. Įvertinti galimybes sukurti įvairiapusiškesnius studentų grįžtamojo ryšio mechanizmus ir užtikrinti, kad programa būtų labiau orientuota į tuos, kuriems ji aktuali (studentus, suinteresuotas šalis, socialinius partnerius ir potencialius darbdavius).

h. Bibliotekos fondai turėtų būti pertvarkyti įtraukiant reikiamos (tarptautinės) mokslinės literatūros.

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Paslaugos teikėja patvirtina, jog yra susipažinusi su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso¹ 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)

¹ Žin., 2002, Nr.37-1341.