STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Kauno technologijos universiteto
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS ''Socialinė politika*'' (valstybinis kodas -
621L40002)*
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT
OF ''*Social Policy''* (*state code - 621L40002*)
STUDY PROGRAMME**
at Kaunas University of Technology

Review' team:

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  5. **Mr. Julius Zubė,** *students' representative*.

Evaluation coordinator -

Ms. Marija Jonikova

Vilnius
2017

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Socialinė politika
Valstybinis kodas	621L40002
Studijų krypčių grupė	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Sociologija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė(1,5) Ištęstinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Socialinių mokslų magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2012-02-15

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INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Social policy
State code	621L40002
Group of study filed	Social Sciences
Study field	Sociology
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1,5) Part-time (2)
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Social Sciences
Date of registration of the study programme	15th February, 2012

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes,** approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team at the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as "very good" (4 points) or "good" (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as "satisfactory" (2 points).

The programme **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	An individual plan for academic staff reflecting workload within an academic year.
2.	Sample of Master's theses

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

The university second-cycle study programme *Social Policy* (hereinafter – Programme) has been implemented at Kaunas University of Technology (hereinafter – KTU) - a public institution of higher education in the Republic of Lithuania.

In general, KTU has 7,620 undergraduate, 2,502 masters, 557 international students and 335 PhD students (as of 16/04/2017). KTU delivers first, second, and third cycle studies in the areas of technology, physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, biomedical sciences and art. 60 undergraduate and 71 master programmes as well as 17 scientific fields of PhD studies. There are 61 study programmes in English.

The second cycle study programme Social Policy was established at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2012. The implementation of the Programme was coordinated by the Department of Sociology until the two faculties were merged and the department became the part of Public Policy and Administration Institute in 2014. The self-assessment of the second cycle Programme has been prepared for the first time and covers time period from the academic year 2012-2013 to academic year 2016-2017.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *24/October/2017*.

1. **Assoc. Prof. dr. Turo Virtanen (team leader),** *Adjunct Professor of Political Science at University of Helsinki, Finland;*
2. **Dr. Dirk Jarre,** *Lecturer at Johannes Kepler University in Linz/Austria and Joanneum in Graz, Austria;*
3. **Assoc. prof. dr. Iveta Reinholde,** *Associate Professor, the Head of the Department of Political Science at University of Latvia, Latvia;*
4. **Dr. Marius Kalanta,** *Founder of KOG Institute for Marketing and Communications Sciences, expert, researcher, supervisor of programs of continuous professional development, Lithuania.*
5. **Mr. Julius Zubė,** *student of University of Copenhagen study programme - African Studies, Denmark.*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The aim of the programme is to "prepare highly competent professionals having critical awareness of social policy theories, systemic understanding of contemporary social welfare issues, able to provide evidence-based arguments in different social policy fields, complying with ethical principles of sustainability" (SER, p. 8). The learning outcomes of the programme

are classified in five groups (each having 2-5 elements): knowledge and its application, research skills, subject-specific skills, social skills, and personal skills (SER, pp. 8-9). The definitions are informative and clear and available on internet for general public and prospective students. They are also generally consistent with the strategy of Lithuanian state – 'Lithuania 2030' – as it has emphasis on smart society, smart economy and smart governance. However, it is not so clear how the learning outcomes reflect the needs of the society and labour market, as the SER does not include sufficient information about the matter. According to interviews, the needs have been addressed as part of the discussions with social partners. The interviewed social partners emphasised sufficient knowledge of the dynamic changes of social policy and legislation, the new role of NGOs, European trends, and skills of foreign languages. However, there is clearly a need for more systematic, evidence-informed and transparent approach in clarifying the state, societal and labour market needs. The programme has addressed the types of work the graduates have competences for (managerial, consulting, expert, and analytical work in national and international social policy institutions), but there is no sufficient indication how the programme has modified its aim and learning outcomes on the basis of the feedback from graduates. However, based on interviews, the employment of graduates has not been a problem.

The programme is compared to other relevant programmes in the country, and the identity of the programme is linked to education of "not only objective social inquirer, but also responsible and active social policy analysts" (SER, p. 13). This is supported by the fact the KTU hosts the production of many national and international social surveys which can be used in the learning processes of the programme. The knowhow of social policy analysis is certainly useful in satisfying the governmental needs of policy information. The programme has managed to create a fruitful connection between the learning processes and the research work of the staff, confirmed also by interviews during the site visit.

The programme has compared the university mission, the faculty mission and the aim and learning outcomes of the programme with each other (SER, pp. 9-10). Although the mission and strategy descriptions are very general and abstract – as they tend to be – it is obvious that the aim and learning outcomes of the programme are not inconsistent with them.

The SER asserts that the aim and the learning outcomes reflect the need for graduates holding a master's degree in social policy. This is demonstrated by the overall demand of the new profile professionals in social policy and growing demand for social policy experts (SER, p. 9). However, the programme does not provide any evidence for these needs and demand. The programme has also paid attention to the requirements of international professional networks and associations – and discussed with foreign members of academic community and social partners in the processes of renewal of the aim and learning outcomes. Unfortunately, the nature of these

processes is left largely open (SER, p. 12-13) and could not be sufficiently specified during the site visit. The learning outcomes are reviewed on annual basis after discussions with staff, students and social partners, but the focus is then more on the course specific learning outcomes rather than on those of the whole programme.

The aims and learning outcomes are compatible with the so-called Dublin descriptors of second cycle results, which is made specified and made transparent in the SER (p. 12-13). This indicates that the intended learning outcomes correspond to the type of studies and level of qualifications typical for Master's programmes. The compatibility with the Description of Lithuanian Qualifications Framework is shown in the SER (p. 11) with clear comparisons. The programme recognizes the competences of graduates reflected in the statements of the European Network for Social Policy Analysis (Espanet). All in all, the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are sufficiently linked to academic and professional requirements, but the links and the processes behind them could be made more transparent both in the area of academic and professional requirements.

The MA theses that were available during the site visit were compatible with the intended learning outcomes, but the research methodology could have been more sophisticated and the literature more international.

The title of the programme is to the point, as for the content of the programme. However, the title of the awarded degree has changed as of September 2017, when Social Sciences is used in the title instead of Social Policy, due to the national reform of organising the titles according to educational fields instead of disciplines.

The programme has analysed its strengths and weakness (SER, p. 14), but it is partly irrelevant as for the aims and learning outcomes, as the weaknesses and improvement actions are not directly related to them, apart from the measures improving research-based analytical skills.

During the site visit, it was obvious that the Faculty has new visions about the future aims of the study programmes, for example, in the form of integrating 'the social' and 'the technological' in the competences and skills of the graduates. So far, these visions, exciting as such, have not affected the aims and learning outcomes of the MA of Social Policy.

2.2. Curriculum design

According to the information provided in table 5 on page 15 of the SER - checked with the document "General Requirements for Master's Degree Study Programmes" - the KTU

master's study programme "Social Policy" fully corresponds to the legislative rules for such a programme in terms of structure, volume and connected ECTS credits.

However, there is one slight concern: While, according to the rules, the student's independent work should not constitute less than 30% of the volume of each course, the SER reports that, in fact, the ratio of independent work represents between 60% and 80% of each course's volume - and 100% for the Master's Degree Project (SER, table 5 on page 15). These are high average percentages may raise the question whether the balance between face-to-face teaching and independent work of students is at its optimum to ensure the defined learning results.

The presentation of the design of the "Social Policy" study programme in table 6 on page 15 of the SER shows a reasonable balance of theoretical and empirical concerns and approaches among the seven core and compulsory courses. There is no indication of possible unnecessary repetition in the content of the various teaching elements. The strengthening of empirical methodology by the introduction of the new course "Computer-assisted Methods for Qualitative Enquiry" as a compulsory element constitutes certainly a very sound move.

However, as the Master's Programme "Social Policy" is not built on a bachelor's programme it should start by an introductory course with focus on "The rationale and benefits of social policy making in modern democratic society" to guarantee solid grounds of understanding for the ensuing theoretical and empirical programme elements.

Regarded as such, the content of the courses on offer in the programme are certainly qualitatively adequate for a Master's Degree in Social Policy. However, there are important gaps in the choice of essential topics to be noticed:

The Master's Programme does not give sufficient prominence to some main basic issues important for a "social policy" programme like, for example: "Key values and objectives of Lithuanian society", "Causes and prevention of societal problems and tensions", "Demographic change" or "Social consequences of scientific and technical advancements". Also relevant topics like "Institutions, actors and dynamics of social policy making" or "Economics of social policies and social programmes" are missing as explicit teaching subjects. Consequently it is suggested to ensure that such key elements be covered in the main courses at offer - and this fact be clearly communicated - or taught in special topic oriented courses. An important topic like "Labour Market and Employment Policy" should not be dealt with in an elective course but be upgraded to a compulsory course.

The elective courses address a great variety of important social policy areas - covering, for example, income maintenance, education, health, families, etc. It should allow students "to deepen specialized knowledge". But with a rather rudimentary number of teachers and such a

small number of students per year it seems to be impossible to fully implement the announced offer of Electives at a high quality level. The problem has been confirmed during the interviews with teachers as well as with students.

The already performed reorganisation of compulsory courses in "cyclic teaching blocks" (except for methodological courses) seems to be appropriate from the pedagogical point of view and very well accepted by students. On the other hand the renewed design of the programme for the academic year 2017-2018, presented in annex 7, does not indicate a fundamental conceptual shift but essentially a strengthening of empirical capacity building. Still, this emphasis is important considering that students "are encouraged to use the data from scientific projects where faculty members are involved" (see no. 51 p.17).

Annex 3 of the SER shows in an interesting manner the relations between the programme learning outcomes and the study modules of the Master's Programme "Social Policy" for the academic year 2016-2017. According to the presentation, the different learning outcomes are to be achieved by repeated but varied combinations of the seven compulsory core subjects with the different electives.

One challenge in this approach lies certainly in the fact that all of the seven listed core courses - in combination with each other and mostly with various Electives - have, as it were, to achieve simultaneously very different learning outcomes: like i.g. theoretical knowledge, policy application, as well as research, social and personal skills (see the correlation between "learning outcomes" and "subjects" in table 1 of annex 3). In this respect intensive communication, cooperation and coordination between teaching staff reveals of key importance. On the other hand, the stated fact of frequent cancellations of Electives, mainly due to the low number of students, represents a non-negligible problem that, so far, according to the interviews, has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner - for example by involvement of teachers from other disciplines in the KTU.

The SER frequently emphasises that the "development and application of critical thinking" (see e.g. table 2 p. 8 or no. 46 on p.16) is a paramount teaching goal. However, no specific didactic element to strengthen this essential capacity systematically is indicated. This issue should be addressed in the next review of the curriculum.

Even though "a research project topic for the final degree project can be proposed by a stakeholder or a student in coordination with a potential supervisor, a university lecturer or researcher" it seems to be the rule that "degree project topics are proposed by university departments, research institutes and centers" (see no. 49 of the SER). It may be considered in the next review of the programme whether it would not be an important capacity-building measure to systematically encourage students to choose and argue for the relevance of the topic of their

master thesis themselves - as it is commonly practiced in other universities (for example Vilnius University). This would also make the demand of the formulation of "recommendations for social policy makers" at the end of the thesis (see no. 50 on page 17) more relevant for the master students.

Even though the general design of the programme structure and of the teaching content is definitely conceived in a manner to achieve the intended learning outcomes there is reason to question the full success of the present approach. Interviews with senior management and teaching staff highlighted four issues that seem to be currently under discussion:

(1) there is on-going reflection on a commonly to be shared concept of the final orientation and precise content of the programme - which positively becomes manifest in the fact of frequent reviews of the programme,

(2) this is most probably, at least partially, due to the fact that a comprehensive understanding of what social policy in Lithuania should all be about and which approach to be taken is still in the making,

(3) the combination of not yet sufficient teaching staff and very low numbers of enrolled students create serious programme design and implementation problems, and

(4) the felt desirable degree of coordination and cooperation between specialised teachers, also from other disciplines, seems not yet to be sufficiently developed.

There is no concrete information about a system of students' placements in social policy related institutions or organisations to familiarise them, during their master studies, with the aspects of implementation of social policy and programmes in practice.

The reading lists of the courses show, in their compulsory and in their additional sections, a fair relationship between English and Lithuanian texts as well as a good mix of "classics" and up-to-date literature.

However, the listing of student's final degree projects finished over the last three years (see annex 6) shows that the choice of thesis subjects clearly concentrates on domestic issues: in 2017 with a total of 8 final degree projects all 8 were on Lithuanian social policy topics, for 2016 with a total of 9 final degree projects 8 concentrated on Lithuanian problems (one could not clearly be identified) and for 2015 with a total of 6 final degree projects just 2 had an international comparative approach. This indicates that student's interest in the international dimension and concerns of social policy has, in fact, not yet been much promoted. Interviews with "stakeholders" and alumni have confirmed this.

It is of considerable interest that the exceptional KTU environmental context - "technology and social sciences under one roof" - constitutes a rather unique chance to combine, in an innovative manner, an advanced concept of the Master's Programme "Social Policy" both

fields of disciplines and thus to confront students in technological studies with possible impact of their professional field and its advancements on society and, on the other hand, familiarise students in the social policy programme with perspectives of technological change on individuals, socio-econom groups and society at large. An outline of such an quite innovative interdisciplinary approach - stressing also the needs of the rapidly changing Lithuanian society - seems to be under consideration, as interviews with senior managment and teaching staff have revealed.

It has become clear during the interviews - in particular with senior managment, teaching staff, "stakeholders" and alumni - that there is presently a general willingness to pursue a sustained process of conpetual rethinking and debate about the further development of the programme in order to benefit from international practice and to respond even better to the needs of the country.

An important "To-Do" is certainly a closer and systematic cooperation with strategic planners and decision makers in social policy related political, administrative and action oriented institutions as well as with potential employers of the future MA graduated social policy students in order to better define the prerequisites in the professional field and the opportunities for the graduates on the labour market.

2.3. Teaching staff

KTU ensured that staff involved in teaching comply to legal requirements. At the moment, the main academic staff of the programme hold PhD degree (100%). This, for sure, is a strong point of programme. The programme is implemented mainly by teachers from Institute of Public Policy and Administration (SER, p.19).

Staff of KTU involved in the programme has extensive pedagogical experience as it is reveal in staff CVs`. The scientific experience and continuous education of the staff reflects considerable efforts invested in the growth of the programme. The qualifications of staff is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes, especially research skills and subject-specific skills. In general, academic staff attracted is highly qualified since there are considerable amount of scientific articles produced as it is revealed in the SER (p.23). However, there is limited number of monographs produced (SER, p.23).

At the moment, according to the SER (p.20) there are 9 teachers in the programme, while there are only 8 students enrolled (data as it was at May 2017). Despite the staff turnover reported (in 2016 3 teachers left, 2 joined the programme), the programme ensures all courses

included in the curriculum as it is pointed in the SER (p.21). At the same time, it was revealed in the interviews that due to small number of students there is a limited amount of elective courses implying also possibilities to integrate research results into teaching.

In addition to this, there is no data in the SER on involvement of practitioners in the programme pointing that the programme being too much theory-driven. However, during interviews, we found out that practitioners and social partners are invited to give lectures and even to deliver a part of the courses. However, the amount of site visits and meetings with social partners is not enough to ensure practice based needs for the programme. At the same time, according to the interviews there are irregular/occasional communication gaps in the courses where a group of teachers is involved regarding sequencing and depth of topics/subjects covered. The same refers also to sequencing of the courses under the cyclic studies approach as it was discovered during interviews.

As it was discovered in the interviews, there are meetings (at least one a month) to communicate changes related to courses, social partner`s needs and all feedbacks in order to incorporate views of stakeholders and ensure development of both: study courses and teaching approach. In addition, there is established a process of "internal/KTU wide accreditation" of the study courses based on the peer reviews, thus staff is involved in the continuous cycle of improvements for the courses. However, at it was said before, communication among staff is an area for continuous improvements as well.

According to the SER (p.21) teachers continuously improve their competences. KTU created conditions for upgrading professional skills of staff mainly through ERASMUS+ programme, some other exchange programmes as well as training courses offered by EDU-LAB at KTU. According to SER (p.23), there are 3 (out of 9) teachers who had research visits abroad at least for week financed by ERASMUS+ programme in 206/2017. In the interviews staff confirmed that they get necessary support for carrying out their teaching assignments as well research assignments including attendance of the international conferences. In addition, there is incentives for staff to publish their findings in high quality academic journals. Library and other resources are provided to support research and teaching as well.

There is annual planning and performance review for each teacher regarding his/her breakdown of workload. Overall performance appraisal of staff is mainly conducted once per 5 years related to re-election for academic positions. The breakdown of workload introduced lately consists of pedagogical (50%), scientific (30%) and expert-consultation (20%) workload motivating teachers to balance pedagogical and research assignments.

In a site visit it was found out that at the moment KTU elaborates a MOOC on "Risk and Security Governance". The first MOOC course under construction along with international and

local online lectures reflects a variety of modern teaching methods applied in the programme. However, still efforts shall be streamlined to provide more internationalisation of the programme as by regular teaching in English as well as inviting more visiting scholars.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

As stated in the SER (p. 25), the premises of a historical building located in the central part of Kaunas are used to accommodate the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and the Institute of Public Policy and Administration, which implements the programme. In 2014 the building was renovated to suit to study and research needs of nowadays and also to comply with hygiene and work safety requirements. 14 classrooms seating from 20 to 70 students are used for the purposes of the study programme. 8 of them are located in the basement. Since the program has been admitting up to 11 students annually during the period of 2012-2016 (SER, p. 28), the number and the size of the classrooms are fully appropriate. During the visit and in the interviews with students special attention was paid to the classrooms located in the basement in order to assess their suitability for studies in respect of light, temperature and dampness. Both the experts and the students found these classrooms comfortable though few students noticed that sometimes they had become a little bit cold.

The SER did not mention any facilities dedicated to the teaching staff as their office space, though the visit and the interviews with the teachers revealed that the Faculty provides an individual office space for every teacher of the programme. These office spaces are used for preparing for the lectures, conducting research and for consulting the students (for the latter purpose the classrooms and a dedicated room are used as well).

Technical and digital equipment used for teaching and learning is fully in line with the learning outcomes of the programme. The standard equipment of every classroom apart from tables and chairs includes a PC computer with office software and internet access, a multimedia projector and audio speakers (SER, p. 25). Additionally, one classroom has an interactive white board and one is equipped for virtual learning (SER, 26). Also during the visit a special classroom equipped for applying design thinking method and regularly used both for teaching students and for teachers to improve their skills was demonstrated. For studying research methods and for students' individual research and written assignments, the programme employs adequate number of computerised work places – four computer classes seating 6, 13, 23 and 30 students and equipped with office and SPSS (Statistical Programs for Social Sciences) software

packages (SER, p. 25-26). The other standard digital equipment, aimed at meeting needs of employed students as well as those preferring to study outside the classrooms or the campus, include wireless internet access in the campus, virtual learning environment and online access to some of the major software like SPSS and "MS Office" (SER, p. 25-26). During the interview the teachers assessed the facilities and equipment they work with as very good, enabling them to perform various teaching related activities like demonstrating, recording, broadcasting and others.

Although the programme employs adequate technical and digital equipment, some space for improvement still exists as evident from both the SER and information gathered during the visit. The need for some improvement was clearly communicated by the teachers and the students, and certain improvement had already been long awaited. Some students have been experiencing difficulties in accessing some online software from their personal computers at home or that only demo versions of some software, for example "Atlas", have been available. From a technical point of view, the classrooms do not provide convenient way to connect an external computer or a tablet to a multimedia projector, what limits possibilities of the teachers and the social partners to use their own devices. Among the long awaited improvements are bigger number of classrooms equipped for interactive problem based training and better "access to newest versions of specialised data analysis software for some courses". These two have already been articulated in the SER as the weaknesses (p. 27) as well as were emphasised by some of the teachers and the students during the interviews. However, as the interview with the administration revealed, no particular investment plans to upgrade the classrooms currently exist as these investments depend on public financing.

Teaching and learning resources available to the students and the teachers of the programme are appropriately wide and accessible. This includes both library resources and access to survey data. The library of KTU has 5 branches in different locations and in total is equipped with 600 standard and 200 computerised workplaces (SER, p. 26-27). The library branch used for the Social policy study programme is the Central KTU library located at few hundred metres distance from the Faculty. The library provides the students and the teachers with books as well as with numerous online resources, including online catalogues and access to major data bases of scientific publications and e-books. In general the teachers and the students, as the interviews revealed, do not experience any library resources problems. Nevertheless an analysis matching the library catalogue with compulsory book lists of study courses of the programme has revealed that the number of copies available in the library frequently is 0, 1 or less than 4, what is definitely not enough with respect to number of students enrolled, and during the interview few students noted that supplementing lacking books with scanned copies has not

entirely been convenient. A positively distinct and worth noting digital resource provided by the library is a plagiarism prevention system used as an obligatory tool to check students thesis. As for the data, the students and the teachers have good access to chronologically and geographically wide social survey data in a number of subject areas as the Faculty hosts the Lithuanian Data Archive (LIDA) and is a Lithuanian representative of the European Social Survey (ESS).

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

The entrance requirements and rules of the programme are well founded and clear, and their information is provided in the University's newsletters and website. Admitted students must have completed first cycle studies, but there is no description of the field(s) in which these studies must be completed. The applicants are ranked according to their average examination scores from their first cycle studies and other scientific activities done by the applicant (conferences, scientific presentations, and publications (SER, p. 27).

The programme's organization of the study process distributes the study time between lectures, practical classes, laboratory work, tutorials/consultations, and independent learning (SER, p. 28). The organization of the programme is suitable for a successful implementation of the programme and achievement of learning outcomes. Students claim that the class schedule is satisfactory and enables the majority of them to combine their employment with their studies. Students have expressed satisfaction with the newly introduced cyclic organization of studies (each course is given intense learning cycles and is taught within the time frame of few weeks), although it was also mentioned that the schedule of cyclic studies has occasionally been unclear, and they do not know the exact courses that they will be studying during different study cycles in the same semester. However, it should be noted that due to the small number of students in the programme, some of the elective courses included in the official curriculum were not available during the time of the programme.

Since the beginning of the programme, students have been participating in the annual students' scientific conference organized by the faculty and have produced 3 scientific publications. The HEI also provides access to an academic information system of potential research mentors to encourage scientific activities (SER, p. 28-29). Students are also provided with conditions to participate in exchange programmes. Students can apply to study in any foreign bilateral partner institution participating in the programme for a period of 3–12 months

or training for a period of 3 months. However, in 2012-2016 only 1 student has participated in the exchange programme (SER, p. 32). The limitations for international mobility have been explained for by student employment and family reasons.

The programme provides sufficient academic and informational support to students (information about the study programme, electives, exam sessions, financial support, achievement assessment system, timetables, mobility possibilities, etc.) through its official university and faculty websites, as well as face-to-face through academic group tutors and the head of the programme, and by email (SER, p. 29). Students are satisfied with consultations with their teachers as well. Furthermore, they acknowledge that their ideas and feedback are desired by the programme staff and are taken into account. For example, in the case of cyclic studies, due to the lack of time to write assignments, students have been given extra independent learning time, applied electronic teaching methods, as well as personal consultations instead of having compulsory face-to-face lectures. University provides financial support opportunities to students in a variety of different types of incentive scholarships for academic and extra-curricular achievements, as well as financial support to socially disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. Financial support for student participation at international conferences and seminars is provided by the University's Fund of the International Relations Development. In the case of psychological and religious support students can receive anonymous individual and group psychological counseling and pastoral counseling (SER, p. 29-30).

The programme's learning assessment system applies a cumulative grading method. The main methods used to assess student achievements are individual work projects, essays, oral and written mid-terms, and final examinations (SER, p. 31). The module assignments are composed and formulated so that most of the learning outcomes in the study subjects are considered. Regarding academic integrity, the Higher Education Institution (HEI) recently introduced a new examination system dedicated to preventing cheating. This includes regulations on the number of supervisors, student ID registration, and classroom selection for the examination. The students are acquainted with the provisions regarding cheating and plagiarism, as well as the inevitable consequences of such activities. Plagiarism of regular written assignments and degree projects is obligatory checked via nationally established e-library service (SER, p. 33-34). Furthermore, students are provided the opportunity to make complaints to the Commission for Settlement of Academic Violations in case of disagreement on their performance assessment and marks or decisions made by the Qualification commission during master thesis defense process (SER, p. 31).

The programme is unable to provide information as to whether it corresponds to the state's economic, social, and future development needs. While referring to the Lithuanian Labour

Exchange data, the SER argues that there is demand for social workers/consultants (which are considered one of the programme careers) in several district regions, even though it acknowledges that at the moment the supply of SP workers is larger than the demand (SER, p. 32-33). The HEI periodically organizes research of graduate employment after the completion of the programme. The employment statistics of the graduates are relatively high (the lowest employment rate of students both 6 and 12 months after graduation was 75% (class of 2014)), however, only 4 (24%) out of 17 students who had jobs after 6 months of graduation were in positions that normally would be considered as career targets of the programme's graduate's (SER, p. 33).

2.6. Programme management

The central operating body is the Field's Study Programme Committee (FSPC) which has members representing faculty, social partners and students (SER, pp. 35-36). The committee is responsible for the vision, strategy and the development of the study programme. The committee together with its manager also revise the structure and the content of the programme – overseen by the Dean and the University's Study Programme Committee. The major changes of the programme are discussed and approved by the Faculty Council. The Head of Department and the manager of the programme are responsible for the implementation and development of the programme. The Vice-dean of studies is responsible for the scheduling and coordination of the study process between study subjects. The University Senate opens and closes the study programmes and the Vice-rector for Studies runs the study programme administration and quality assurance. The responsibilities of decision making and monitoring of the programme are formally clearly allocated. Based on interviews, the centralized and decentralized decision making on the study programme is in balance and functioning well.

The FSPC organisation is relatively new, as the managers and members were elected for the first time in 2016 for a three year term. The members of the committee are chosen by the manager of the committee (except for student members). Social policy belongs to the committee responsible also for European Studies and Sociology. According to the interviews, the experiences of the new type of programme committees are good. The committee is a platform that gives better possibilities for discussions across disciplinary boundaries than previous arrangements.

The University seeks to ensure coherence between study process and the labour market with cooperation agreements with social partners, but this is still partly in process. However, the

programme is able to recognize its major stakeholders (ministry, municipalities, and institutions relevant for social policy; SER, p. 37) and collaborates with them. The major forms of cooperation are development projects, participation in teaching (as representatives of practitioners) and taking part in the meetings of the study programme committee and the Commission of Social Partners which works on Faculty level. According to interviews, both the programme and the stakeholders consider the practice useful and contributing to the quality of the programme. However, they also see that contribution of the social partners could be based on a more systematic and structured dialogue. The selection of partners could be more strategic and they could be involved also in other activities than teaching and learning.

The structure of the internal quality assurance follows the general authority structure related to study programmes. The manager of the FSPC is responsible for the quality of the programme and analyses all feedback information periodically from different stakeholders. KTU has a general stakeholder feedback system based on periodical surveys of students, graduates, teachers and employers. According to interviews, the feedback systems provides useful information also for a particular programme. In addition to general surveys, the programme managers and the faculty administration organize round table meetings. Study programmes can conduct their own surveys as part of quality assurance, and social policy has done that in January 2017. Social policy has also laid down the practice of organizing midterm meetings with students.

Although the formal quality assurance is operating, it is not clear how useful it is on the level of study programmes, as they have their individual needs. The SER does not specify any changes of the study programme or its management that have been implemented on the basis of feedback information. However, according to interviews, students feel that their wishes are taken account. The staff and the students can interact informally and often, because the number of students is small. Some social partners are actively engaged in discussions about the future of the programme, but the effectiveness of these discussions is unclear. Based on interviews, also better contacts to graduates and more organised alumni activities would benefit the programme. It seems that there is space for improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal and external quality assurance.

The information about the study programme is public, relevant and easily accessible on the website of the University. Information about study programme evaluations and accreditation is published on the website of KTU and results are dealt with in department meetings.

2.7. Examples of excellence *

* if there are any to be shared as a good practice

III. RECOMMENDATIONS*

1. The innovative potential of the "Social Policy" study programme to provide a bridge between and a combination of elements of technical disciplines and social science should be actively explored - also in a discussion process between faculties of the concerned disciplines in order to define the mutual benefits, necessary commitments and possible new implementation strategies.

2. The present "Social Policy" study programme should be very carefully reassessed in view of its innovative potential to provide a bridge between and a combination of elements of technical disciplines and social science.

3. There is a need for more systematic, evidence-informed and transparent approach in clarifying the state, societal and labour market needs, when the aim and learning outcomes of the programme are reviewed.

4. As the MA "Social Policy" study programme does not require the previous BA graduation in the subject it should offer a substantive and concentrated introductory course on what social policy is all about to lay the indispensable grounds for successful studies in the discipline.

5. On these grounds, the new profile should then be proactively communicated not only inside the university itself but also, and in particular, nationwide to relevant institutions and organisations - including market actors and organised civil society - that can benefit from the future outcome of the programme.

6. In parallel, the "marketing" of such a new "Social Policy" study programme should be intensified at national level as well as in the international context in order to attract higher numbers of students and develop intensified specific academic and institutional cooperation - with universities, research bodies and intergovernmental organisations.

7. If this option is to be pursued, the new profile should be proactively communicated not only inside the university itself but also, and in particular, nationwide to relevant institutions and organisations - including market actors and organised civil society - that can benefit from the future outcome of the programme.

8. Students should be regularly updated about the structure of the study programme, particularly regarding elective course selection and the order of cyclic studies.

9. Adequate staffing and coordination to guarantee that all the essential issues of the broad and complex subject "Social Policy" can be covered on a high quality level should then reasonably support the advanced concept.

10. Internationalisation and visiting scholars are to be considered to ensure improvement of the programme.

11. Convenient capacity to connect external devices to multimedia projectors in the classrooms would make presenting in various formats and from various devices easier for the teachers as well as for the social partners, corresponding well to the trend of increasing mobility of information and communication technologies.

12. Consider paying more attention to how digital resources work in practice and reviewing IT support the students receive.

13. Consider reviewing compulsory book lists of study courses to match them better with library supply.

14. The contribution of the social partner could be based on more systematic and structured dialogue, including formal agreements of cooperation. The selection of partners could be more strategic and they could contribute more effectively also to other activities than teaching and learning.

15. Better contacts to graduates and more organised alumni activities would benefit the programme.

IV. SUMMARY

In general, KTU has proved its capacity and ability to design a programme with a well-balanced approach towards theoretical and empirical topics. The aims of the programme and learning outcomes are informative and clear and available on internet for general public and prospective students. The programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are sufficiently linked to academic and professional requirements.

For the master study programme on "Social Policy" the rather exceptional context of KTU can be of great advantage, considering that it provides "technology and social sciences under one roof", which creates opportunities for creative combinations of disciplines with a high potential of mutual learning.

The reorganisation of some core theoretical courses into "cyclic teaching blocks" is advantageous for teachers and students - and well accepted. At the same time, the elective courses offer the possibility to students to familiarise themselves with a great variety of social policy issues and approaches.

The willingness of senior management and academic staff to be involved in an on-going reflection process about the objectives, the structure and the content elements of the "Social Policy" study programme is remarkable. Staff is experienced and committed to deliver courses based on the research where they are actively involved and supported.

The premises are fully adequate in terms of the number and the size of classrooms and office space for the teaching staff. The programme has all necessary resources (technical and digital equipment, data archives, library) to ensure a teaching process and to achieve quantity and quality with the learning outcomes of the programme.

The programme has established a good practice in collecting feedback form the main stakeholders as well as designing the new multidiscipilinary study programme committee as a platform for better possibilities for discussions across disciplinary boundaries.

However, the programme need to invest efforts for a more systematic and structured dialogue with the social partners including graduates and alumni that would benefit the programme. The programme needs a more systematic, evidence-informed and transparent approach in clarifying the state, societal and labour market needs.

There are still substantial gaps in the scope of the content elements of the social policy programme (e.g., didactic elements for critical thinking) that as key issues need to be filled in -

or at least be more prominently addressed in various courses. The international orientation of the study programme is still underdeveloped - with the need of more international contacts, cooperation and teaching in English as well as increased emphasis on comparative social policy research of students' master's thesis.

With the presently relatively low number of teachers and students it is impossible to implement properly all the elective courses at offer. Ensuing cancellations lead to frustration and demotivation among interested students.

There is no indication that a substantive placement programme (internships) exists - considered as most appropriate for practice experience, professional orientation as well as a promotion of future employment opportunities. Finally, more classrooms equipped for interactive problem based training are lacking.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Social Policy* (state code – 621L40002) at Kaunas University of Technology is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	3
	Total:	**18**

*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:	Assoc. Prof. dr. Turo Virtanen
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Dr. Dirk Jarre
	Assoc. Prof. dr. Iveta Reinholde
	Dr. Marius Kalanta
	Mr. Julius Zubė

KAUNO TECHNOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETO ANTROS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *SOCIALINĖ POLITIKA* (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621L40002 (6211JX045)) 2018-02-28 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-18 IŠRAŠAS

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Kauno technologijos universiteto studijų programa *Socialinė politika* (valstybinis kodas – 621L40002) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	3
	Iš viso:	18

* 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

Apskritai KTU pademonstravo gebėjimą ir galimybes sukurti programą, kurioje gerai dera teorinės ir empirinės temos. Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai yra informatyvūs ir aiškūs,

internete prieinami plačiajai visuomenei bei būsimiesiems studentams. Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai yra pakankamai susieti su akademiniais ir profesiniais reikalavimais.

KTU magistro laipsnio studijų programoje „Socialinė politika" dėstomas gana išskirtinis turinys gali būti didelis privalumas atsižvelgiant į tai, kad joje „po vienu stogu dėstomi technologiniai ir socialiniai mokslai", suteikiantys galimybes kūrybingai sujungti disciplinas, taip sukuriant didelį bendro mokymosi potencialą.

Kai kurių pagrindinių teorinių studijų dalykų reorganizavimas į „ciklinius dėstymo blokus" yra naudingas dėstytojams ir studentams ir gerai priimamas. Tuo pat metu pasirenkamieji dalykai studentams suteikia galimybę susipažinti su įvairiais socialinės politikos klausimais ir metodais.

Aukštesnioji vadovybė ir akademinis personalas pageidauja aktyviai dalyvauti nuolatiniame socialinės politikos studijų programos tikslų, struktūros ir turinio elementų vertinimo procese.

Dirba patyręs personalas, įsipareigojęs dėstyti studijų dalykus, grindžiamus moksliniais tyrimais, į juos aktyviai įsitraukiantis ir juos vykdantis.

Patalpos geros, tinkamos pagal auditorijų skaičių bei dydį ir dėstančiojo personalo biurų erdvę. Yra visi būtini materialieji ištekliai (techninė ir skaitmeninė įranga, duomenų archyvas, biblioteka), kurie užtikrina dėstymo procesą bei leidžia pasiekti numatytąją programos studijų rezultatų kokybę ir kiekybę.

Programos vykdytojai iš pagrindinių socialinių dalininkų gauna grįžtamąjį ryšį, taip pat kuria naują tarpdalykinį studijų programos komitetą kaip platformą, suteikiančią daugiau galimybių rengti diskusijas tarp skirtingų dalykų dėstytojų.

Vykdant programą reikia dėti daugiau pastangų, kad būtų kuriamas sistemiškesnis ir labiau struktūrinis dialogas su socialiniais partneriais, įskaitant absolventus ir buvusius studentus; tai būtų naudinga programai. Programai reikia sukurti labiau sisteminį, įrodymais grindžiamą ir skaidrų metodą, kuris padėtų išsiaiškinti, kokie yra valstybės, visuomenės ir darbo rinkos poreikiai.

Vis dar vyrauja gana didelės socialinės politikos studijų programos turinio elementų spragos (pvz., trūksta kritinio mąstymo didaktinių elementų), kurios turi būti užpildytos ar bent įvairiuose studijų dalykuose aiškiau naikinamos. Tarptautinė studijų programos orientacija vis dar nepakankamai išvystyta: reikia užmegzti daugiau tarptautinių ryšių, bendradarbiauti su kitomis mokymo įstaigomis ir dėstyti anglų kalba, taip pat teikti daugiau dėmesio lyginamiesiems socialinės politikos studentų magistro baigiamųjų darbų moksliniams tyrimams.

Kadangi šiuo metu programoje yra santykinai mažai dėstytojų ir studentų, neįmanoma tinkamai įgyvendinti visų siūlomų pasirenkamųjų studijų dalykų. Jais susidomėję studentai buvo nusivylę ir prarado motyvaciją mokytis atšaukus numatytus dėstyti studijų dalykus.

Nėra požymių, kad siūloma pakankamai mokomosios praktikos pasirinkimų, kurie laikomi tinkamiausia praktine patirtimi, profesiniu orientavimu bei suteikia įsidarbinimo galimybes

ateityje. Galiausiai trūksta auditorijų, kuriose būtų sumontuota įranga dialoginiam, problemų sprendimu grindžiamam mokymui.

<...>

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Reikėtų aktyviau nagrinėti socialinės politikos studijų programos inovacinį potencialą sujungti technines disciplinas bei socialinius mokslus ir jų elementų kombinacijas, taip pat vykdant diskusiją tarp konkrečių disciplinų fakultetų, kad būtų galima apibrėžti bendrą naudą, būtinuosius įsipareigojimus ir galimas naujas įgyvendinimo strategijas.
2. Reikėtų itin atidžiai iš naujo įvertinti dabartinę socialinės politikos studijų programą, atsižvelgiant į jos inovacines galimybes sujungti technines bei socialinių mokslų disciplinas ir jų kombinacijas.
3. Vertinant studijų programos tikslą bei studijų rezultatus reikėtų sistemiškesnio, labiau įrodymais grindžiamo ir skaidresnio požiūrio siekiant išsiaiškinti, kokie yra valstybės, visuomenės ir darbo rinkos poreikiai.
4. Kadangi socialinės politikos magistro laipsnio studijų programoje nėra reikalavimo būti prieš tai baigus šios srities bakalauro laipsnio studijas, reikėtų dėstyti bazinį koncentruotą įvadinį socialinės politikos kursą, kad studentai galėtų įgyti būtinuosius pagrindus ir sėkmingai mokytis šią discipliną.
5. Apie šį naująjį profilį reikėtų aktyviai informuoti ne tik universiteto viduje, bet ir pirmiausia nacionaliniu mastu atitinkamas institucijas ir organizacijas, įskaitant rinkos dalyvius, ir organizuotą pilietinę visuomenę, kurios galėtų gauti naudos iš būsimųjų programos rezultatų.
6. Tuo pačiu metu reikėtų aktyviau reklamuoti tokią naują socialinės politikos studijų programą nacionaliniu bei tarptautiniu mastu, siekiant pritraukti daugiau studentų, plėtoti intensyvesnį specifinį akademinį bei institucinį bendradarbiavimą su universitetais, mokslinių tyrimų institucijomis ir vyriausybinėmis organizacijomis.
7. Jei bus siekiama tokio tikslo, apie naująjį profilį reikėtų aktyviai informuoti ne tik paties universiteto viduje, bet ir pirmiausia nacionaliniu mastu atitinkamas institucijas bei organizacijas, įskaitant rinkos dalyvius ir organizuotą pilietinę visuomenę, kurie galėtų gauti naudos iš programos rezultatų.
8. Studentus reikėtų reguliariai informuoti apie studijų programos struktūrą, ypač apie pasirenkamųjų dalykų pasirinkimą ir pakopinių studijų tvarką.
9. Reikėtų priimti atitinkamą skaičių darbuotojų ir juos koordinuoti, kad visi esminiai platus ir sudėtingo socialinės politikos dalyko klausimai būtų nagrinėjami aukštu lygiu ir būtų pagrįstai susiję su pažangia koncepcija.
10. Siekiant užtikrinti programos tobulinimą reikėtų apsvarstyti tarptautinimo galimybę ir galimybę pasikviesti mokslininkų iš kitų universitetų.
11. Galimybė auditorijose prie daugialypės terpės projektorių patogiai prijungti pakankamai išorinių įrenginių dėstytojams bei socialiniams partneriams suteiktų galimybę lengviau teikti pristatymus įvairiais formatais ir iš skirtingų įrenginių, drauge atitiktų didėjančio informacijos ir ryšio technologijų judumo tendenciją.
12. Reikėtų daugiau dėmesio skirti tam, kaip skaitmeniniai ištekliai naudojami praktikoje, ir patikrinti, kokia IT pagalba teikiama studentams.
13. Reikia peržiūrėti studijų dalykų privalomų perskaityti knygų sąrašą, kad jis labiau atitiktų bibliotekos išteklius.
14. Socialinių partnerių indėlis galėtų būti grindžiamas labiau sisteminiu ir struktūriniu dialogu, įskaitant oficialias bendradarbiavimo sutartis. Partnerius reikėtų rinktis daugiau remiantis

strateginiu požiūriu, jie taip pat galėtų efektyviau prisidėti prie kitos veiklos, ne tik dėstymo ir mokymosi.

15. Programai būtų naudinga palaikyti geresnius ryšius su absolventais ir aktyvesnėmis alumnų organizacijomis.