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Klaipėdos universiteto  
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *MEDIJOS IR KOMUNIKACIJA***  
*(valstybinis kodas - 621P90006)*  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**OF *MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION* (state code - 621P90006)**  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Klaipėda University

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Medijos ir komunikacija</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621P90006
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Komunikacija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (1,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Komunikacijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2012

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## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Media and Communication</i>
State code	621P90006
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Communication
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1,5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Communication
Date of registration of the study programme	2012

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### I.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).

### I.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.	Letters of recommendation provided in 2011 and 2012 by the social partners “Vakarų ekspresas”, “Bernardinai”, the Klaipėda Cultural Communication Centre, the Lithuanian Librarian Association, the National Newspapers Publishing Association of Districts and Cities, and the regional library of Klaipėda for the Centre for Quality Assessment of Higher Education and The Ministry of Education about the need for the Media and Communication study programme.
2.	Copy of the protocol of the meeting held on 13 May 2015 in the Department of Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Klaipėda University with the social partners.
3.	Description of the professional development of the staff of the study programme of Media and Communication in 2012-2015
4.	English summary of the results of the survey among graduates of BA programmes in Informology and Journalism in October-November 2011.
5.	English summary of the results of alumni of the master’s study programme Media and Communication, 2-4 March 2015
6.	Updated employment data of alumni
7.	Number of students in the study programme in 2013, 2014 and 2015

8.	Number of students who have passed courses on the use of databases offered by the library
9.	Description of the process of working out aims and learning outcomes of the graduate study programme Media and Communication
10.	Description of internal quality assurance measures that were applied for the MA study programme and information for improvements.

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

Klaipėda University (KU) is a regional university, established in 1991, and located on the Baltic Sea coast, and it primarily draws its students from western Lithuania. The city has good potential as a maritime business and tourism centre, and the mission of KU is to contribute to the development of Klaipėda and the whole of Lithuania as a maritime state by training qualified specialists. KU is the only state university in western Lithuania and was given accreditation as an institution of higher education for six years in 2012. At present KU has over 6000 students in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral study programmes in seven faculties. The university participates in the principal academic networks in the Baltic region and Europe, and has collaboration agreements with universities in more than 40 countries. It also participates with some 190 European universities in the framework of the EU student mobility programme Erasmus+.

The graduate study programme *Media and Communication* was launched in 2012 by the Department of Communication, which is also responsible for the Journalism BA programme, which has completed its third evaluation. For the MA programme, this is the first evaluation of the programme. Stakeholders were consulted before the opening of the new study programme and they expressed their support for the new programme. The programme has now functioned for three years.

### ***1.4. The Review Team***

The review team was put together according to *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of the Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *14 September 2015*.

- 1. Prof. Johannes Bardoel, PhD (team leader)**, *emeritus professor in Communication Science of the Radboud University of Nijmegen, and a researcher at the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), part of the Department of Communication Science of the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.*
- 2. Mr. Andrew David Dawson**, *Director of International Relations and Projects, Director of Studies, and Senior Teaching Fellow at the Department of Information Studies, University College London, United Kingdom.*
- 3. Prof. Triin Vihalemm, PhD**, *Professor at the Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, University of Tartu, Estonia.*
- 4. Mr. Mindaugas Grajauskas**, *Consultant and manager of gamified products, OVC Consulting, Lithuania.*
- 5. Ms. Meda Keleckaitė**, *doctoral student of Kaunas University of Technology study programme Economics, Lithuania.*

**Evaluation coordinator – Ms. Dovilė Stonkutė.**

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The aim of the graduate study programme *Media and Communication* is to “train highly qualified communication specialists who have acquired the latest theoretical knowledge in the field of the science of communication, as well as the necessary practical skills and the experience of their application to research, who have observed human values and ethical standards in their activities, and who are able to restructure the current systems of communication and develop communication strategies based on the use of different media” (SER, p 6). The wording of this aim is well balanced between academic quality and social needs and is proactive. However, the realization of this aim via learning outcomes and curriculum design needs clearer vision and tactical management, which is explained briefly here and in other subsections.

There are 10 master's degree programmes in the field of communication studies in Lithuania. The justification for opening a KU programme teaching media and communication was explained in SER and in the site meetings with management, mainly based on the regional need for a workforce and students' willingness to study near home. Considering the decreasing number of students (see Table 1 in the *Management* section), the question arises as to whether this very narrowly focused strategy is sustainable.

It is mentioned in SER that learning outcomes are defined by using several domestic and international programmes as models and that programme developers have considered, in the wording of the outcomes, what competences are important for employers. The evaluation team also suggests seeking out opportunities to develop and communicate the unique qualities of the KU study programme. The programme developers describe in SER the competitive edge as being a combination of humanist values, and creative and innovative potential, complemented by the knowledge of marketing and entrepreneurship. The first graduates, however, revealed in feedback surveys that they lacked the skills of organizational communications, public relations and interpersonal and mediated communication. The alumni employment data (SER, Appendix 8; updated data provided on request) show that only approximately half of the graduates were employed in the area of their studies, including two people who were employed as lecturers. The evaluation team suggests the programme management analyse the situation carefully because the availability of professional employment opportunities is one of the most important arguments for selecting a particular study programme. The programme management team should analyse the opportunities to contribute to the increase in the proportion of professionally employed graduates (e.g. by encouraging professional self-employment, involving more elements that lead to professional networking and internships in the programme or by other means).

In the context of the above-mentioned factors, the learning outcomes seem to be too abstract. Many of them need more content useful for employers and students. For example, references to entrepreneurship, marketing, organizational communications and interpersonal communications skills are missing from the learning outcomes.

Some of the learning outcomes are hard to comprehend, perhaps because of poor translation. What is the actual meaning of learning outcome C.3: “The ability to justify initiatives and to apply them to activities in cases of limited amounts of information about the constantly changing new media and their impact on the environment”?

Outcome C.2: “The ability to apply the knowledge of a potential impact of communication on society and on audiences and to integrate it into media ...” and C.4: “The ability to analyse and critically evaluate the impact of media and the processes of communication on audiences...” are

rather similar and would benefit from more differentiation. The same goes for outcome C.1: “The ability to apply the acquired knowledge in the field of communication to media when consulting on issues of media application, shaping the content of the new media, in media marketing...” and C.5: “The ability to propose initiatives and to solve the problems of creative media integration into the activities of public relations and media management”. In Section E, “Personal abilities”, there is significant overlap between different variants of media use skills, which raises the question of how the outcomes of personal abilities are differentiated from the special abilities described in Section C.

In general, the learning outcomes correspond to the professional requirements posed by employers and society overall. The skills involved in the critical analysis of the political and economic processes in contemporary society are not stressed in the programme. This aspect is important in the preparation of media and communication specialists, who not only need to know how to communicate (use of different media and communication formats) but also how to make content-wise decisions about what to communicate.

In conclusion:

- The programme aims and learning outcomes are publicly accessible, and generally comprehensive, with some overlap that calls for correction.
- The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on academic and professional requirements, but in the context of the competition of ten universities, the decreasing number of students and moderate employment opportunities for graduates in the field of their specialisation, the aims and learning outcomes of the programme require additional analysis regarding how well they correspond to the current needs of the labour market and how comprehensive they are for stakeholders and potential students. Based on the results of the analysis of the review panel, some revision of the aims and learning outcomes might be necessary in order to make them more relevant to stakeholders and potential students, as well as stressing the strengths and unique features of the KU programme compared to other programmes in the field.
- The programme aims and learning outcomes are generally consistent with the type and level of studies. The levels of qualifications offered need further specification and improvement in terms of their acquisition in order to increase the share of graduates employed in the field of their studies and the graduates' general satisfaction with the programme.
- The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are generally compatible with each other. However, the skills of critical analysis of the political and economic processes in contemporary society and organizations are not stressed in the programme outcomes, although they are stressed in the programme aims.

## ***2.2. Curriculum design***

The curriculum is designed according to the minimal volume requirements, consisting of 90 ECTS, all of them study field courses. According to the SER, the logic of the curriculum is as follows: during the first semester, introduce theoretical concepts of media and communication, (the development of) media types, the specifics of mediatised communication and media and communication research methods. The process of writing the thesis also starts. The second semester is devoted mainly to the application of media in particular sub-fields (e.g. political communication) and teaching practical skills to use various technical tools (e.g. Wordpress.com, Photoshop, InDesign and Sony Vegas software) for self-expression and management and marketing communication, as well as the evaluation of the effects of communicative actions (SER, p. 12). The third semester is devoted to thesis writing and offers one elective course. The programme uses various novel didactic approaches, e.g. interview modelling, seminars and blog

maintenance (SER, p. 14), but in the course descriptions traditional lecturing dominates. Co-operation between the courses is rare. Besides local specialists, American, German and Norwegian teachers are involved in (distance) teaching.

The current design of the study programme makes it possible to offer mainly a lecture-based gallery of overviews of different subjects without the possibility of deeper specialization and practical training of analytic, creative or interactive skills. This design seems to be better suited for undergraduates who have their BAs in other disciplines and who want to complement their skills with media and communication literacy (see also SER pp. 10-11). Raising media literacy and introducing opportunities for creative media use are stressed in the curriculum (p. 10). Principally, the chosen line seems to correspond well with the general developments in the modern mediated world, where education that combines two or more disciplines makes a person more competitive. But very few students from the Journalism BA programme continue their studies at the MA level and the reason may lie in the fact that (according to the undergraduate survey from 2011) students are interested in opportunities for further specialization in the field of media and communication that the current curriculum design does not offer. Attracting more Journalism BA undergraduates and achieving the aim of a truly interdisciplinary graduate education require a wider scope of curriculum in terms of students' workload (ECTS) and number of elective courses that provide the opportunity for deeper specialisation, as well as holistic tasks that encompass different subjects.

Below, the three major problems with curriculum design are explained and some solutions are suggested.

The master's thesis takes up one third of the curriculum, which indicates a high proportion of independent learning in the acquisition of the learning outcomes that are promised in the curriculum. That may work well when the supervising process is a well-concerted effort by both the student and the supervisor. The SER states briefly that "To ensure the quality of master's final theses, time for individual consultations with academic advisers is planned" (p. 12) and "Regular consultations with the academic advisor contribute to the consistency and quality of the final thesis and allow academic advisers to judge the independence of the conducted research. At the end of each semester, master's students are to report to their academic advisers (the department) on the process of writing the final theses and the related research. Academic advisers shall grade the students' semester work" (p.13).

Methodological and theoretical support is crucial in the students' independent research process. Curriculum and site visits raised some doubts about the approach to teaching research methodology and methods. The only course that addresses methods does not show which methods are covered and the team did not get a clear answer to that question during the site visit. The research methods are not described explicitly in the course description. The quality of supervision both in theoretical and methodological terms depends too much on the students' own initiative to consult teachers with particular qualifications and competences. Review of MA theses revealed great variety in used (English) methodological terminology and style of presentation of empirical evidence, and sometimes poor consistency between research questions and chosen methods. The evaluation team suggests taking action to improve the methodological quality of MA theses by setting up a clear system to ensure that all students have good opportunities to access systematic methodological consultancy (including clarification of research method terms) and timely feedback about consistency between research problems, research sub-tasks and the methods they intend to use.

Review of theses and course descriptions, as well as meetings with students, revealed that the students were not sufficiently guided and motivated to use international topical journals that



contain the latest developments in particular areas. Although students are taught to use the library databases within the course Scientific Communication and a voluntary library introductory course, the Lists of References do not include many references to the leading topical journals and books. Many of the English language books used in teaching were published at least a decade ago, and these are not classic books but rather overviews and readers, which need to be updated more frequently. Also, the alumni survey revealed that the methodological resources - textbooks, books, periodicals and databases – are not sufficient (70% of the respondents thought so).

The other major problem with curriculum design is related to elective courses. The share of elective courses is small compared to the international tradition of universities. The present system of compulsory and elective courses satisfies neither students nor teaching staff. The teachers said at the meeting that courses teaching more strategic management skills were not selected by the students. In addition, the students complained in the feedback survey that they were offered a limited choice and some students could not take the electives they were interested in because of the small number of interested students. Such courses as Neo-rhetorics, Media Management Strategies and Critical Studies in New Media Environment and Creative Media have not been taught at all since the beginning of the programme in 2012. At the same time, creativity was mentioned as the key learning outcome in the programme. Several elective courses are fundamental for achieving the promised learning outcomes, such as Communication Strategy, Media Management Strategies and Critical Studies of New Media, although students are not obliged to take them. The system of electives urgently requires reform because it hinders opportunities for deeper specialisation in sub-fields of media and communication-related qualifications. Management need to review the system to solve the problem of insufficient enrolment (e.g. by changing the composition of compulsory and elective subjects and/or offering the courses more broadly throughout the university).

The third group of problems is related to the opportunities for specialization. The majority (80%) of the graduates evaluated the programme as satisfactory (not good or very good). This indicates the need for improvement in the current curriculum on the basis of the experience of the first years. The alumni survey indicated the expectation that the new study programme would cover both the public and business sectors, but the current programme is built mainly on the logic of media channels without introducing the generalities and peculiarities of communication and media work in the public, business and third sectors.

According to the survey, students felt there was a lack of courses in the fields of organizational communications (crisis communication and document management), public relations (corporate image, protocol and advertising), and interpersonal and mediated communication skills (rhetoric and creative writing). The undergraduate study also revealed potential student interest in deeper coverage of media technology subjects.

The programme writers promise to develop students' abilities to "apply the acquired knowledge of the area of communication to consulting (i.e. with politicians or culture representatives), or the creating of new media strategies (in institutions or for individuals), or the use of media in marketing" (SER, p. 12). Consulting and communication strategy-making competences require skills in analysing societal and organizational context and communication processes. Those skills are usually taught in courses related to organizational communication and management. Relevant courses, as well as courses developing interpersonal communication skills (which are necessary in order to implement the strategies) are currently missing from the curriculum.

The first feedback from alumni also indicated that students felt there was a lack of courses that developed more practical skills. That need may be addressed by giving students more opportunities to apply their knowledge and test their skills in real-life situations (not tasks-by-

the-book, which is certainly a simpler solution for the teacher). Some improvements have already been reported, and the evaluation team suggests continuing with them while also seeking out opportunities for integrative tasks that cover skills acquired in different subjects. A good example here is a short film that students made as a part of the Media and Socialisation course. The students' expectation of more practical skills may also be satisfied by including internships or subjects having some short-time internship-like components (job-shadow days, making target group analyses for organizations etc.).

In inspecting the course descriptions, both good practices and shortcomings appeared. Some of these are mentioned below as examples that could serve as the basis for planning further professional development activities:

- The course description of Communication Theories and Methods is a mixture of bits from semiotics and positivistic concepts of media effects. Cultural studies (including representationalist research methodology) and discussions of audience participation (including relevant research methods) are lacking. The teaching of methods is weakly supported by practical applications. The description does not show explicitly who the main theorists are or what the concepts are that are referred to in the course. The list of references is outdated. This subject requires major improvements.
- Intercultural communication and media offers a good selection of course literature. With slight revisions, this course can also be used for teaching the research methods and methodology needed for MA theses.
- There are several subjects that show certain mismatches between the contents and the titles. For example, the title "Strategic communications" does not match its contents. The current course is a popular overview of PR, not of strategic communication.

In conclusion:

- The curriculum design meets legal requirements.
- Study subjects are not spread evenly: the third semester is filled with individual preparation for MA theses and the classes take place during the first and second semesters. Since many courses are devoted to the teaching of media use and media channels, there may be repetitive parts, but this cannot be determined merely on the basis of the inspection of documents. Basically students are left on their own initiative during the third semester and, besides individual supervising appointments, teaching staff seem not to have explicit responsibilities for them. The system of electives is poorly organised and needs reform (described in detail above).
- The contents of the courses and/or modules are partly consistent with the type and level of the studies. The current design of the study programme offers only shallow coverage of different sub-fields without the opportunity for deeper specialisation and more practical training at higher levels. The teaching of research methodology and methods at the MA level should be more elaborated and include training and encouragement of the use of databases, especially field-specific journals and international research literature. The quality of supervision of MA theses depends too much on the students' own initiative to consult teachers who have particular qualifications and competences, and supervision should be re-arranged more systematically (see above).
- The scope of the programme, contents and methods of the courses/modules are not fully sufficient to ensure learning outcomes and the rather ambitious general mission of the programme. That may also be the reason for a decreasing number of students, the low interest in the programme among the department's own undergraduates and the low level of employment of graduates in the fields of their studies. Some subjects that are crucial in achieving the promised qualifications are electives and are not accessible when there are not enough students interested. The current programme does not have enough content to cover the promised learning outcomes, such as strategic communication-related

consulting with institutions or individuals (SER, p. 12), which requires training skills to analyse societal and organizational context and processes that can be taught in courses related to organizational communication, management and interpersonal communication skills; these are currently missing from the curriculum or are poorly covered because of the system of electives or of mismatches between titles and contents of subjects (explained above). Of the teaching methods (didactics), students lack those that provide opportunities to apply their knowledge and test their skills in real-life situations. Some improvements have already been reported, and the evaluation team encourages continuing these improvements while also seeking out opportunities for integrative tasks that cover skills acquired in different courses.

- The content of the programme in terms of its references to recent developments in the field of media and communications is varied. In addition, the literature (overviews and normative theories) used in the courses is sometimes quite old and locally oriented without any references to recent paradigm changes and international academic sources. Students are not encouraged to use international journals that reflect recent achievements in the field.

### ***2.3. Teaching staff***

According to SER, 14 teachers (among them seven professors) are involved in teaching courses (three of them did not actually teach last year because their subjects were not selected by enough students). The majority of them have PhD degrees. Only four teachers are employed by the Department of Communications, which runs the programme, three teachers are employed elsewhere in the Faculty of Social Sciences, two come to teach from other Lithuanian universities and three (distance) teach from abroad. Thus the maintenance of the programme depends largely on how attractive and feasible it is for teachers outside of the department. In terms of area of specialisation and research, the staff profile is rather heterogeneous: journalism, art, design, advertising, library research, philosophy, public policy, political communication etc. The academic record of the (senior) staff is modest: the personal h-index (according to Google Scholar) falls between one and four, publications have mainly local scope (published in Lithuanian) and no international research grants have been awarded to the staff members. Most of the staff members are older (born between 1955 and 1963). Increasing the opportunities of graduates and staff seems to be crucial for further development.

Upon request, the faculty provided detailed records of the professional development of the teaching staff. These records clearly showed the limited scope of the professional development of the majority of the teaching staff. The main tools for professional development are local conferences held once or twice a year. That is surely not enough to keep up with the international standards of research and teaching on the level of tertiary education. The opportunities to attend international conferences and gain grants of international cooperation are very limited. The majority of the staff (except the Chair, Prof. D. Janavičienė and the lecturer J. Pupelienė) have not completed any courses, workshops, Erasmus visits etc. to develop teaching skills. At the meeting with staff, the lack of opportunities to develop English skills for academic teaching and writing became apparent, as well as the lack of organized support for English editing of academic articles written by the staff. The management have made attempts to attract scholars with solid academic records (e.g. Prof. Walter) from other countries to teach in Klaipėda. In the near future, management should develop a clear strategy to increase the opportunities of the teaching staff for international mobility and academic publishing, as well as for the development of the teaching and language skills of the staff.

In conclusion:

- The study programme provided by the staff meets legal requirements.

- The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure the learning outcomes.
- The size of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes in quantitative terms but the majority of staff are older (see below).
- The conditions and motivation system for the professional development of the teaching staff could be (organised) better. The majority of the teaching staff did not attend any international professional conferences, didactic courses, workshops, Erasmus visits etc. during the evaluation period. The teachers lack organized support for English editing of academic articles. The management strategy seems to be to import scholars, and not to support the development of the teaching and language skills of the staff.
- The teaching staff of the programme are partly involved in research (or art) related to the study programme, but the majority of the studies are applied research. Very little topical academic research has been published by the staff members in international media.
- The sustainability of the programme is somewhat questionable because of the dominance of older staff members and the high number of visiting teachers. Improving the opportunities of graduates seems to be crucial for further overall development.

#### ***2.4. Facilities and learning resources***

According to SER, the programme has satisfactory facilities to perform the tasks of teaching, and management have continued efforts to improve the facilities. There are classes for teaching via computers and all classes are equipped with data projectors. Computers in classes are equipped with basic software for social analysis, such as SPSS. There is not suitable space for conducting group work, smaller seminars or workshops. The programme has access to the common technological facilities of the Faculty of Social Sciences, including a studio for audiovisual production (Appendix 7.3).

The teachers themselves have during 2010 - 2015 compiled seven teaching aids in the Lithuanian language (Appendices 7.1 and 7.2) and students can access international e-journal databases through the central library of KU (EBSCO, Emerald Management eJournals Collection, Science Direct, Springer Link, Taylor & Francis, see Appendix 7.4). The library of KU has received most of the items as donations, but they have also done some target ordering. Teachers are involved in the ordering process of new scientific literature. At the same time, 70% of respondents marked as “not sufficient” for the question category “methodological resources - textbooks, books, periodicals and databases”. One reason may be that students are taught how to use the library, other facilities and learning resources during their BA studies. On the basis of a site visit, the evaluation team suggests organizing courses on how to use databases and introducing the resources to MA students (as a compulsory element) and teaching staff. Several up-to-date English language books were available in the library, but courses used books issued at least a decade ago (according to the course descriptions). Teachers should motivate students to use professional journals and databases in the courses.

In conclusion:

- The premises for studies are basic but generally adequate both in size and quality.
- The teaching and learning equipment (laboratory and computer equipment, and consumables) are adequate both in size and quality.
- The programme does not have internships.
- Teaching materials are not sufficient, in the opinion of the alumni. The textbooks and books used in courses are of varying quality in terms of being up to date and should be updated more systematically. The professional journals and databases are principally accessible via the KU library e-channels, but are underused by students and teaching staff.

## ***2.5. Study process and student performance assessment***

Students have basic social and financial support (according to the regulations of KU and national laws) for their studies and they benefit from a variety of different forms of learning, including an integrated distance learning module and independent work (self-learning). The small number of students limits their choices of electives because some subjects are not taught due to the small number, or total lack, of interested students. It is notable that students of this programme do not actively use the mobility opportunities. Only one student has made an Erasmus visit. The other students explained their lack of interest in mobility programs by the poor choice of Erasmus cooperation partners.

Feedback was collected from the first four graduates informally in 2014 and from later graduates formally via a standardised e-survey in 2015. The information was discussed in meetings with staff and stakeholders. Feedback is collected only at the end of the programme, not at the end of particular courses. The development of feedback collection shortly after the end of each course is strongly advised, as is the development of a system of specific improvements on the basis of the results of student feedback. According to SER (p. 28), there is a centralized feedback collection methodology in KU, so realization of this suggestion might be complicated, although not impossible. At the site meeting, students said that they had good opportunities to discuss the teaching and course-related issues with teachers and were generally satisfied with their relationships with teachers. At the same time, the evaluations of some courses and of the programme as a whole were not particularly positive. The evaluation team suggests using anonymous surveys, informal talks with students and the quality assurance method as measurements.

Students reported in the survey the need to get more hands-on experience during their studies. Although some improvements were made after the graduate survey (e.g. during the course of Media and Socialisation, students made a short film), the scope and didactic nature of the practical tasks should be discussed with staff and improved where necessary. In general, students who attended the site meeting were satisfied with the feedback they got in their assignments and theses, but in the survey most of the alumni were rather critical of the methodological resources used for teaching. At the meeting, students were not able to describe how they were guided to integrate the knowledge from various subjects and apply it in practical projects. The evaluation team concludes that they completely lacked this kind of experience.

Students have to attend classes during the first year of their studies. In the second year, they are principally left on their own in terms of working on their MA theses and arranging consultations with teachers besides their supervisors. The organisation of electives is unsatisfactory for students, who feel it needs improvement (see above).

The table 1 (see subsection 2.6) compiled according to the statistics provided by the department reveals that a large number of students have quit or delayed their studies. Additional documentation does not provide information about whether and how the department communicates with students who want to quit and what kind of support is offered to them. The investigation of reasons and prevention is an important tool for programme management.

The MA thesis is the main channel for students' involvement in research.

In conclusion:

- The admission requirements follow the standards, and no special requirements are used.
- The organisation of the study process generally ensures adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes, but there are several

shortcomings that need improvement: the system and arrangement of electives, practical tasks (including integrated tasks) and methodological resources (all discussed above). There is no systemic feedback collection at the end of specific courses. There are delays in student evaluations and general assessments of all courses are collected altogether. It is advisable to re-arrange the feedback collection system.

- Students are encouraged to participate in research mainly via their MA theses; their involvement in artistic activities and applied research activities is unsystematic and varies according to particular courses and teachers (e.g. students made a short film during one course).
- Students have opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes but they complain about a poor choice of partner universities, which does not motivate them to exercise this opportunity.
- The higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support.
- The assessment system of student performance is clear, adequate and publicly available; students said at the meeting that they were satisfied with their opportunities to ask for clarification from teachers.
- The professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme providers' expectations.

## ***2.6. Programme management***

Evaluations and suggestions concerning programme management are conducted on the basis of reported procedures, observations and provided facts. These approaches provide the majority of evidence of management's effectiveness and efforts. The current condition of the programme has been explained in the previous sections and in this section the problems are reviewed briefly to avoid repetition.

The report provides a thorough but formal description of how the management system works, mainly referring to the centralized quality management arrangements of KU. According to SER and additional documents, the input for programme development comes from staff meetings, surveys of graduates (2015) and undergraduates (2014), and meetings with stakeholders (the only protocol of the study committee meeting provided was dated 13 May 2015 and was combined with that of the BA programme). The programme developers also reported on input for programme development coming from informal talks (e.g. Dr. Janina Pupelienė had individual meetings with the first graduates of the study programme), the proposals and comments of the Student Union and publications in the press. The information from the graduate surveys was used to make improvements in the programme by involving foreign teachers, and to develop more practical assignments.

According to SER (p. 28), there is a centralized feedback collection methodology in KU, so the criticism provided above might not concern only the programme management but also the centralized system in KU.

The development of the programme was done mainly by the core teaching staff. The stakeholders were involved and they also issued letters of approval, some of them very topical, and some rather formal. In general, the communication and involvement style of stakeholders is rather formal, and the meetings are held infrequently (no meeting memos before May 2015). Considering that there is no internship programme, the communication with stakeholders and the understanding of their needs are still rather hit or miss.

In general, the management procedures seem to be rather basic: mostly guided by the formal requirements and arrangements with outside actors, not by internal initiative. The rather reactive

management style needs to be replaced by a vision-driven and proactive style in order to solve the problems the study programme faces, which are summarized below.

The sustainability of the programme is very critical. According to the statistics provided by the department, students' interest in the programme is decreasing (see Table 1). Three students dropped out or delayed their studies in 2013/14 and 2014/15. A programme that has less than ten students is not sustainable either in financial or academic terms (e.g. the system of elective subjects does not offer a real opportunity to choose because groups are too small).

**Table 1. Number of students in the MA programme**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
1 <sup>st</sup> year	4	16	8	7
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	-	4	13	5
<i>Total</i>		20	21	12

The programme urgently needs further development and a communication plan in order to attract more students in autumn 2016. The increase in students is critical in terms of the sustainability of the programme. Solving the following problems may greatly help in this process:

1. The general aim of the programme is very ambitious but in its present curriculum design, which is focused mainly on media channels, it does not deliver all of the promised learning outcomes, such as consulting, and creating communication strategies.
2. Instead of setting a narrow regional focus on the programme's strengths and unique features compared to competitors, deeper specialization opportunities should be developed and addressed when communicating with potential students, especially BA undergraduates studying in the same department;
3. It is necessary to develop and implement a plan to increase the professional employability of the graduates by introducing the new subjects of entrepreneurship, marketing, organizational communications and interpersonal communication skills; professional networking and contacts with potential employers during studies (via internships or otherwise) should be enhanced; analysis is needed of the future trends of the labour market and the learning outcomes should be updated accordingly (new media-related jobs and specialities);
4. In order to achieve the above goals, reform of the curriculum should be considered: increasing students' workloads (ECTS) and the number of elective subjects would make deeper specialisation possible, including practical training of organisation or society analysis, and creative and interactive skills;
5. In order to support the teaching staff, opportunities for international professional communication and self-representation (e.g. conferences), didactic self-development and (better) English language skills are needed, as well as tools to improve graduate and staff development.

In conclusion:

- Responsibilities for decisions and the monitoring of the implementation of the programme are regulated by the central quality standards of KU, but simply mechanically following them seems to be insufficient and the programme lacks internal vision-driven management.
- Information and data on the implementation of the programme is collected infrequently and using insufficient methods, and it seems that no substantial conclusions have been reached from the information.
- As the programme has been evaluated for the first time, no earlier external evaluations are available for comparison. SER reports on the existence of some feedback collection from stakeholders, students and staff, but no systematic, critical self-reflection and

market/context monitoring practice have been used to strengthen the viability of the programme;

- The evaluation and improvement processes infrequently involve stakeholders. Other systematic feedback collection channels are not in use (e.g. internships and regular study committee meetings);
- The internal quality assurance measures have apparently not been effective enough because the programme has not been able to attract students.



### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Analyse the market situation and sustainability issues of the programme and develop principal solutions. Further market and competition situation analysis and regular involvement of potential employers is also needed. Consulting experts is also needed concerning opportunities for niche specialisation on the basis of current resources, and new (future) professions.
2. The curriculum needs to be re-designed to deliver on the promised learning outcomes and to increase the employability of graduates by introducing the new subjects of entrepreneurship, marketing, organizational communications and interpersonal communication skills; it is necessary to stimulate professional networking and contacts with potential employers during studies (via internships or otherwise), analyse the future trends of the labour market and update learning outcomes accordingly (new media-related jobs and specialities). Increasing students' workloads (ECTS) and the number of elective subjects would provide the opportunity for deeper specialisation, and practical training in organisation or society analysis, as well as creative and interactive skills.
3. Improving the opportunities for graduates and supporting the teaching staff through opportunities for international professional communication and self-representation (e.g. conferences), didactic self-development and (better) English language skills are needed, as are tools to improve graduate and staff development.
4. It is recommended to develop and implement a plan to increase the professional employability of graduates by introducing the new subjects of entrepreneurship, marketing, organizational communications and interpersonal communication skills, to stimulate professional networking and contacts with potential employers during studies (via internships or otherwise), and to analyse the future trends of the labour market and update learning outcomes accordingly (new media-related jobs and specialities).

### **III. SUMMARY**

The viability of the programme is questionable because in recent years the number of students has decreased significantly. The international evaluation team considered the regional importance and good topical potential of the programme and suggest, in the near future, substantially improving the attractiveness of the programme. The general aim of the programme is ambitious enough and consistent with the type and level of studies. However, the learning outcomes need additional analysis regarding how well they address the current needs of the labour market and how comprehensive and relevant they are for stakeholders and potential students. If necessary, they should be revised.

Programme management and curriculum design are the dimensions of the programme that need most improvement. The collection of the market information and students' feedback should be more systematic and the implementation of improvements faster. The improvements should be aimed at increase of the employment of graduates in their specialisations.

The teachers involved into the programme are devoted to their work and have good relations with students. However, they do have very limited opportunities for international professional communication and self-representation (e.g. conferences); they are not involved in didactic self-development activities and have undertaken a relatively small amount of academic research. The

management's responsibility is taking care of graduates and supporting the teaching staff in their international professional communication, didactic self-development and improvement of their English language skills.

The organisation of the study process generally ensures adequate provision of the programme, some feedback is collected from students, and improvements are made on that basis. However, the organization of the study process needs improvement, including the system and arrangement of electives, giving more practical tasks, updating and increasing methodological resources and motivating students to actually use them (e.g. reading more professional international journals). The teaching materials are not sufficient, according to the alumni survey. The quality of textbooks and other books used in courses varies and they should be updated more systematically. Professional journals and databases are accessible via the KU library e-channels but are underused by both students and teaching staff.

The premises and equipment for studies are basic but generally adequate, but increasing the space for group work is advisable.

The evaluation team has made several suggestions for how to improve the viability of the programme. For details, please consult the previous section, "Recommendations".

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Media and Communication* (state code – 621P90006) at Klaipėda University 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	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	2
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>16</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Dr. Johannes Bardoel
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Mr. Andrew David Dawson
	Prof. Dr. Triin Vihalemm
	Mr. Mindaugas Grajauskas
	Ms. Meda Keleckaitė

**KLAIPĖDOS UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS  
MEDIJOS IR KOMUNIKACIJA (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621P90006) 2015-11-09  
EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-278 IŠRAŠAS**

&lt;...&gt;

**V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS**

Klaipėdos universiteto studijų programa *Medijos ir komunikacija* (valstybinis kodas – 621P90006) vertinama teigiamai.

<b>Eil. Nr.</b>	<b>Vertinimo sritis</b>	<b>Srities įvertinimas, balais*</b>
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	<b>Iš viso:</b>	<b>16</b>

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

2 – Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

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

4 – Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

&lt;...&gt;

**IV. SANTRAUKA**

Programos gyvybingumas yra abejotinas, nes pastaraisiais metais studentų skaičius gerokai sumažėjo. Tarptautinė ekspertų grupė įvertino studijų programos regioninę svarbą, puikias faktines galimybes ir siūlo artimiausioje ateityje iš esmės didinti programos patrauklumą. Bendras programos tikslas gana ambicingas ir atitinka studijų rūšį ir pakopą. Tačiau reikia papildomai analizuoti studijų rezultatus, nustatyti, ar jie tenkina dabartinius darbo rinkos poreikius, yra išsamūs ir aktualūs socialiniams dalininkams ir potencialiems studentams. Jei būtina, juos reikia persvarstyti.

Programos vadyba ir studijų sandara – programos aspektai, kuriuos reikia tobulinti labiausiai. Informacijos apie rinką ir studentų grįžtamojo ryšio rinkimas turėtų būti atliekamas sistemingiau ir patobulinimai įgyvendinami sparčiau. Patobulinimais turėtų būti siekiama didinti absolventų įsidarbinamumą ir jų specializavimąsi.

Programą vykdytys dėstytojai yra atsidavę darbui ir palaiko gerus santykius su studentais. Tačiau jų tarptautinės profesinės komunikacijos ir savęs atstovavimo (pvz., konferencijose) galimybės labai ribotos; jie nedalyvauja didaktinėje saviugdų veikloje ir atlieka santykinai mažai akademinį tyrimų. Vadovybė turi rūpintis absolventais ir padėti dėstytojams užsiimti tarptautine profesine komunikacija, didaktine saviugda ir tobulinti anglų kalbos įgūdžius.

Studijų proceso organizavimas iš esmės užtikrina tinkamą programos vykdymą, tam tikras grįžtamasis ryšys iš studentų organizuojamas ir tuo remiantis atliekami patobulinimai. Tačiau reikia tobulinti studijų proceso organizavimą, įskaitant pasirenkamųjų dalykų sistemą ir išdėstymą, skiriant daugiau praktinių užduočių, atnaujinant ir papildant metodinius išteklius ir motyvuojant studentus juos iš tikrųjų naudoti (pvz., skaityti daugiau profesinių tarptautinių žurnalų). Pagal alumnų apklausą dėstytojų medžiagos nepakanka. Vadovėlių ir kitų knygų, naudojamų dėstant, kokybė skiriasi, juos reikėtų atnaujinti sistemingiau. Profesiniai žurnalai ir duomenų bazės KU bibliotekoje prieinamos per elektroninius kanalus, tačiau studentai ir dėstytojai jomis naudojasi nepakankamai.

Studijoms skirtos patalpos ir įranga yra paprasta, bet apskritai tinkama, tačiau rekomenduojama didinti grupinio darbo patalpas.

Ekspertų grupė pateikė keletą pasiūlymų, kaip padidinti programos gyvybingumą. Daugiau informacijos rasite ankstesniame skyriuje „Rekomendacijos“.

<...>

### **III. REKOMENDACIJOS**

1. Analizuoti rinkos situaciją, programos tvarumo klausimus ir parengti pagrindinius sprendimus. Toliau nagrinėti rinkos ir konkurencijos situaciją ir reguliariai įtraukti potencialius darbdavius. Taip pat reikia konsultantų ekspertų, kurie patartų dėl nišinės specializacijos galimybių, panaudojant esamus išteklius, ir dėl naujų (būsimų) profesijų.
2. Perdaryti studijų turinį, kad būtų galima pasiekti numatytus studijų rezultatus, ir padidinti absolventų įsidarbinimo galimybes įtraukus naujų verslumo, rinkodaros, organizacinės komunikacijos ir asmeninių bendravimo įgūdžių dalykų. Būtina skatinti kurti profesinį tinklą ir megzti kontaktus su potencialiais darbdaviais studijų laikotarpiu (per mokomąją praktiką ar kitu būdu), analizuoti darbo rinkos ateities tendencijas ir atitinkamai atnaujinti studijų rezultatus (naujos su medija susijusios darbo vietos ir specialybės). Didinti studentų darbo krūvį (ECTS) ir pasirenkamųjų dalykų skaičių, kas sudarytų sąlygas labiau specializuotis; taip pat vykdyti praktinį mokymą organizacijoje arba atlikti visuomenės analizę, ugdyti kūrybinius ir interaktyviuosius įgūdžius.
3. Norint pagerinti absolventų galimybes ir suteikti dėstytojams tarptautinės profesinės komunikacijos ir savęs atstovavimo galimybių (pvz., konferencijose), būtina didaktinė saviugda ir geresni anglų kalbos įgūdžiai kaip priemonės absolventų ir dėstytojų tobulėjimui užtikrinti.
4. Rekomenduojama parengti ir įgyvendinti planą, kaip padidinti absolventų įsidarbinamumą pagal profesiją imant dėstyti naujus verslumo, rinkodaros, organizacinės komunikacijos ir asmeninių bendravimo įgūdžių dalykus, skatinti profesinio tinklo sukūrimą ir megzti ryšius su potencialiais darbdaviais studijų laikotarpiu (per mokomąją praktiką arba kitaip), analizuoti ateities tendencijas darbo rinkoje ir atitinkamai atnaujinti studijų rezultatus (naujos su medijomis susijusios darbo vietos ir specialybės).

<...>

Paslaugos teikėjas patvirtina, jog yra susipažinęs su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)