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STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *SKANDINAVISTIKA*
(*valstybinis kodas – 621R61001*)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES* (*state code - 621R61001*)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Skandinavistika</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621R61001
Studijų sritis	Humanitariniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Skandinavų filologija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės studijos (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Skandinavistikos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2011-12-23

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Scandinavian studies</i>
State code	621R61001
Study area	Humanities
Study field	Scandinavian philology
Type of the study programme	University Studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (2)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Scandinavian Studies
Date of registration of the study programme	23 rd December 2011

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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

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

The basis of the evaluation of the *Scandinavian Studies* MA study programme (state code 621R61001) is the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) written in 2015, its annexes and the site visit of the expert group to Vilnius University in May 2015. The Self-Evaluation Report (72 p.) has been

written by a team composed of eight persons: 3 Associate Professors, 2 lecturers, one administrator, one student and a social partner. The tasks of the self-evaluation are clearly defined (SER, p. 9–10), and the report is precise and comprehensive.

The visit took place on 5th and 6th May and incorporated all required meetings with different groups: the administrative staff of the Faculty of Philology, staff responsible for the preparation of self-evaluation documents, teaching staff, students of all levels of study, alumni, and social partners. The expert group inspected various facilities (classrooms, libraries, IT provision), examined samples of students' work, such as Masters theses, course work and examination material. The site visit concluded with the expert group presenting its overview of the visit and general conclusions to the self-evaluation team and members of staff. After the visit, the team met to discuss and agree the content of this report, which represents the members' consensual views.

The *Scandinavian Studies* MA study programme is run by the Centre of Scandinavian Studies (the Centre), belonging to the Faculty of Philology (the Faculty), pursuant to all the legal acts of the Country and to the rules of the University. VU Division of Scandinavian Studies was established in 1991 as the Department of Scandinavian Studies. In 2006, it was renamed a centre.

The Faculty comprises 10 academic departments and 5 centres, which carry out research and study programmes. The Faculty is headed by the Faculty Council and the Dean. The administration of the Faculty consists of the Dean and Vice-deans. There are 243 members of academic and research staff and about 1470 students. The Faculty offers 10 Bachelor study programmes, Master study programmes and doctoral studies in the field of philology.

The Centre offers one *Scandinavian Studies* BA programme and two postgraduate MA programmes in *Scandinavian Studies* and *Scandinavian and European Studies*. In addition, a minor programme in *Scandinavian Studies* is available for students at the Faculty. The Centre is the only institution in Lithuania providing study courses of this kind and scope: Danish, Norwegian, Swedish languages, cultures and history, and partially Icelandic and Finnish. The Centre has 21 full-time or part-time teachers: 3 professors, 6 associate professors (Doctors), 4 Doctors of Humanities, 7 Lecturers and 1 Assistant lecturer.

The Centre contributes to the field of *Scandinavian Literature, Philology and Linguistics, Translation Theory* and *Lexicography*. It publishes a series of academic and educational books under the title of *Scandinavistica Vilnensis* and organises international research conferences and seminars, e.g. the conferences *Feast, Play and Puzzles in Scandinavian Studies* and *Children's Literature—Trends and Taboos*, both in 2012 (SER, p. 60). Two current teachers of the Centre defended their doctoral dissertations at the Faculty in 2012.

The current *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme was approved in December 2011, replacing the Master study programme in *Scandinavian Philology*. The reform was motivated by students' interests, trends at European universities, and a wish to increase the number of students enrolling on the MA programme. As stated in SER, the MA programme under analysis had only undergone an evaluation process as a new programme. Now self-evaluation is being performed for the first time, almost three years after the programme's registration and the start of activity implementation (SER, p. 10–11).

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was assembled according to the *Description of experts' recruitment* document, approved by order No 1-55 of 19 March 2007 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, as amended on 11 November 2011. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 6th May 2015.

- 1. Dr. Irina Moore (team leader)** *University of Wolverhampton, Senior lecturer, United Kingdom.*
- 2. Prof. dr. Hanna Lehti-Eklund,** *Helsinki University, professor, Finland.*
- 3. Dr. Sturla Berg-Olsen,** *Language Council of Norway, Senior adviser, Norway*
- 4. Snorre Karkkonen Svensson,** *UAB Nordisk, Director, Lithuania/ Norway*
- 5. Ms. Alisa Stunžaitė,** *student of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Education with an emphasis on TESOL*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

As mentioned on p. 5, the *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme replaced the Master studies in *Scandinavian Philology* in December 2011. The general aim of the *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme is to produce professional specialists in the field of Scandinavian studies. The reasons for the reform were well grounded in the current professional and academic needs of the society. Integration of linguistic and cultural studies is a common trend in European universities, and the reform of the programme along these lines makes it more modern and comparable to similar programmes in Europe. The Memorandum on Nordic Languages, signed by the Lithuanian Ministries of Social Security and Labour, Foreign Affairs, Economy, and Education and Science in the autumn of 2011 increased the strategic importance of learning of Scandinavian languages and cultures in Lithuania (SER p. 8), Discussions with the programme management and social partners showed that the reform was also facilitated by the steadily increasing demand

in linguistic expertise in Scandinavian languages in Lithuania (SER, p. 42–43), but a market analysis with specific numbers is not shown in the Self-evaluation report. According to the SER (p. 33) and the discussion with the programme management team during the meeting, the viability of the programme will only become clear in the next few years, after the graduation of the first cohort of the students. There is a slight increase in the number of graduates from 4 to 8 from 2011 to 2014 (p. 32). As the programme has only been in operation for three years and the first new BA students from Scandinavian Studies at Vilnius University graduate this spring (2015), the next years will show how the programme will develop in the future (SER, p. 32–33).

The aims of the *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme include the following areas of competences: Scandinavian languages (mainly Danish, Norwegian or Swedish) and their literature, culture and history and the social, political and economic development of the region. The communicative competences in the aforementioned Scandinavian languages and in translation/interpreting skills should be consistent with the European level C1. In addition, analysis of Scandinavian cultural and social processes, awareness of cultural and political affinity of the Northern countries and their specific features are mentioned (SER, p. 12). The programme aims and learning outcomes, as presented in SER (p. 13), are accessible on the webpage of the Scandinavian Centre intended for students and entrants: www.skandinavistika.flf.vu.lt, now <http://www.flf.vu.lt/struktura/katedros/skandinavistikos-centras>. On the website, they are, however, presented in a very general manner and do not correspond fully with the statements made in the Self-evaluation report.

In order to achieve the aims of the programme, four types of competences were developed: subject-specific knowledge, practical skills, cognitive skills and transferrable skills, which all include five different areas. The subject-specific competences developed by the programme are: linguistic knowledge and the ability to apply it when carrying out research, literature and rhetoric skills, intercultural competence, cultural, historical, social, and political knowledge of Scandinavia and language abilities. The cognitive and transferrable skills include the following: generic competences such as analytical and critical thinking, social skills and tolerance, ability to work as a team and independently, and the ability to write texts and discuss them in a target language. The detailed lists of these competences and learning outcomes are presented in SER, Tables 1, 2 and 3, pp. 15–17.

The aims of the programme and its learning outcomes, as presented in SER, are based on the academic and professional requirements, take into account the public needs and the needs of the labour market. They mainly correspond with the activities performed by professional philologists and translators or interpreters. Abilities in intercultural communication, which are

mentioned among the requirements for specialists, are also developed. However, curriculum content might be a little more focused on students' needs (cf. 2.2).

One important merit of the specialists of this programme is their good practical command of Scandinavian languages, which is one of the requirements of employers for job applicants. This became apparent in discussion with social partners, alumni and students. They also pointed out one of the reasons for the high demand for graduates of the programme – effective intercultural communication (as well as linguistic competence).

Another advantage of the programme is that it ensures unity of research and studies and provides fundamental education in humanities. Equal attention in the programme is devoted to language and linguistics, literature and literary theory; knowledge of culture, its past and present.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered. The programme aims at providing universal education and educating specialists according to the mission of Vilnius University. The description of the programme aims is also compatible with the stipulations in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and the Statute of Vilnius University (SER, p. 13).

The name of the programme (*Scandinavian Studies*) is compatible with the name of the field of study and its learning outcomes, which include Scandinavian languages, linguistics, literature, culture, history and social and political knowledge of Scandinavia at different levels.

The meetings with alumni and social partners demonstrated that the graduates of the programme are well prepared to work as translators and specialists in various Scandinavian companies, and with some changes will also be better equipped to research in different social and educational contexts. However, the aims and learning outcomes of the MA programme should be clarified by creating a clearly discernible profile with reference to the BA programme. It is important that the *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme in the future has a clearer socio-philological focus giving the students academic expertise in language policy, multilingualism or contrastive linguistics (see 2.2).

It may be concluded that the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered can with some changes be developed to be compatible with each other.

2.2. Curriculum design

The *Scandinavian Studies* MA study programme comprises a total of 120 credits, organised in four blocks: 1) compulsory subjects: 45 credits; 2) chosen subjects within the field of study:

15 credits; 3) subjects of free choice, either within the field of study or from the total range of courses offered at the university: 30 credits; 4) MA thesis: 30 credits. This curriculum design meets the legal requirements set out for higher education study programmes in Lithuania. A commendable feature of the curriculum is the large element of freedom offered to students to choose subjects both within the field of Scandinavian Studies and from other fields of study. The contents of the subjects offered are consistent with what one should expect in an MA programme in this field. Furthermore, the contents of the subjects mostly develop gradually at different stages of the studies. After closely analysing the curriculum design and after discussions with staff and students, the expert team noted that there is clear evidence of a logical incremental progression of subjects content from level to level. This corresponds to the planned learning outcomes. The curriculum and teaching methods are considered to be appropriate for ensuring that students reached the intended learning outcomes. Still, there is a potential for improvement on certain points.

The Centre operates with a list of 9 specialty-related subjects that can be offered to students (SER, p. 22ff.). As became apparent during the meetings, the number of subjects actually offered each semester is lower. The Centre should strive to provide students with a realistic picture of which optional subjects will be offered and at what time.

The subjects given in the programme – compulsory and optional – cover a wide range of topics within the field of Scandinavian Studies. Giving the programme a broad profile that includes e.g. Scandinavian Politics and History of Ideas in addition to more traditional philological subjects is a good choice, also in view of the needs of Lithuanian society. A somewhat puzzling fact in view of this is that there are no courses on topics such as sociolinguistics, language policy, psycholinguistics and multilingualism in the programme. These are fields that have gained prominence in recent years and that would be very relevant in a study programme of this kind. Also, at least in the case of sociolinguistics and language policy, the Centre has highly competent people who could teach such courses. The Centre should consider establishing courses in the mentioned disciplines, possibly in cooperation with other departments at the Faculty.

Since many of the students will work in multilingual settings, the Centre should to a greater extent focus on contrastive linguistics – the differences between Scandinavian and Lithuanian, English and other languages of which the students have knowledge. Although this perspective might be present in practise, it does not show in the course programmes.

A recurring theme in the meetings was the fact that many of the students end up teaching Scandinavian languages in different contexts. Still, the study programme does not include

courses in psycholinguistics or second-language acquisition. Introducing these topics to the programme would answer the needs of the students and also increase the relevance of the programme to the society.

According to the course description the optional subject in translation includes both (written) translation and (oral) interpreting, a fact that was verified during the meetings. However, the curriculum of this subject contains no sources on the theory of interpreting. This is a deficiency that should be amended; translation and interpreting are separate disciplines with different theoretical underpinnings.

During discussions with students some discrepancies were discovered between course descriptions and the actual implementation of subjects. Thus at least on some occasions the number of contact hours given had been considerably lower than stated; at one occasion 6 contact hours were given, while the course description stated 32. It should be pointed out that the course descriptions should reflect the actual content of the subjects and must be kept up to date in order to function as intended both for teachers and students.

The curriculum of the *Scandinavian Studies* MA study programme is solid with strong literature, culture and translation elements. With the adjustments mentioned above the programme could be made even more attractive and answer the needs of students and the society.

2.3. Teaching staff

The *Scandinavian Studies* MA study programme is implemented by 21 full-time or part-time teachers: 3 Professors, 6 Associate Professors (Doctors), 4 Doctors of Humanities, 7 Lecturers and 1 Assistant Lecturer. Of these, 3 are external professors from international universities, Stockholm and Södertörn University, Sweden, and Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. The programme also has 3 external lecturers from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Funding from the international research programmes from Scandinavian countries ensures the continuation of this practice. Defence of final theses always involves participation of Scandinavian supervisors or invited opponents from Scandinavia. Thus, in reality, the programme is implemented by more professionals in the field of Scandinavian Studies than the regular staff working at the Centre. In addition, the Centre has an on going co-operation with several experts at universities abroad providing lectures, consultations, distance learning and supervision of Master's theses. Co-operation partners are, for example, the Universities of Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Tartu and Riga (SER, p. 27). Invited visitors also include several authors writing in Scandinavian languages, for example Torgny Lindgren, Märta Tikkanen, Theodor Kallifatides, Odd Abrahamsen, Sofi Oksanen, Kim

Blæsbjerg, Helena Henschen, Erling Kittelsen (SER, p. 9). The study programme provided by the staff meets the legal requirements for MA programmes (no less than 80 % of all study subjects teachers must have a scientific degree; out of them, no less than 60 % of major study field teachers' exercised research activity has to comply with their taught study subjects. No less than 20 % of major study field subjects' volume has to be taught by teachers holding a Professors academic degree).

Most of the teachers of the *Scandinavian Studies MA* study programme also teach on the BA programme, the *Scandinavian and European Studies MA* programme and on the minor studies programme.

The members of the academic staff implementing the study programme are highly qualified specialists in relevant fields and some are active researchers. Their teaching experience ranges from 3 to 43 years. Twelve of the full-time and part-time teachers have a doctoral degree, seven are permanent members of staff of the Centre. The Centre's teachers have regular opportunities to go for internships in Scandinavia and participate in methodical summer courses organised by the Scandinavian Ministries of Education and Science at least once every two years (SER, p. 27–28). The staff is given opportunities to attend courses, seminars, and research projects (for the latter see below): funding from projects was used to organize three conferences at the Centre 2011–2012, for example with the theme *Fictive Autobiographies* (SER, p. 60–61). Also visits with 23 visitors giving guest lectures and seminars, e.g. in translation of fiction, were held at the Centre during the period. Some of the staff also had grants for international academic visits at Scandinavian universities. Members of the academic staff have regular performance appraisals: every five years job positions are announced, teaching and research activities of every applicant are assessed (SER p. 28). During this period, two of the teaching staff have also written their doctoral dissertations. Thus, the higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme. However, it was not clear from the SER nor from the interviews, if the University offers e.g. pedagogical courses for new members of teaching staff. If such a university-wide programme is absent, then the department could consider a mentoring scheme for the new members lead by its experienced teachers.

Nine of the teachers on the programme are active researchers in areas that cover lexicography (Aurelija Griškevičienė, Erika Sausverde), Scandinavian philology (Erika Sausverde, Rasa Baranauskienė, Ugnius Mikučionis) and linguistics (Birutė Sprauniene, Axel Holvoet, Giedrius Tamaševičius, Ugnius Mikučionis) and literature (Ieva Steponavičiūtė Aleksiejūniene). Further, prof. Erika Sausverde and Loreta Vaicekauskienė specialize in sociolinguistics and language

contacts, Three of the teaching staff (Loreta Vaicekauskienė, Aurelija Griškevičienė, Rasa Baranauskienė) have published bilingual dictionaries between Lithuanian and Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic) and Erika Sausverde is working on a Swedish-Lithuanian dictionary. Birutė Spraunienė, Aurelija Griškevičienė, and Erika Sausverde have also published grammars and vocabularies in Scandinavian languages. The staff also publish in international, Baltic and Scandinavian language and literary journals and books, and the following persons are involved in international research projects: Aurelija Griškevičienė is leading a lexicographic project in order to produce a Norwegian-Lithuanian dictionary, involving also Jurgita Petronyte and Eglė Išganaitytė-Paulauskienė. Birutė Sprauniene participates in the international project *Valency, Argument Realisation and Grammatical Relations in Baltic*, led by prof. Alex Holvoet, also teaching at the Centre. Loreta Vaicekauskienė is a participant in the project *Globalization and social and family plurilingualism in medium-sized linguistic communities*, carried out by Barcelona University, Spain.

Five of the Centre's teachers, Ugnius Mikučionis, Alma Braškytė, Rasa Baranauskienė, Eglė Išganaitytė and Stefan Gottschalek Anbro, also function as active translators between Lithuanian and the Scandinavian languages, which benefits the teaching of translation skills. Alma Braškytė has, for example, translated children's books from Swedish and Eglė Išganaitytė-Paulauskienė has translated more than 15 books – fiction and non-fiction – from Norwegian. She received the Lithuanian PEN club's prize as translator of the year in 2009 for her translation of Per Petterson's *Ut og stjæle hester (Out Stealing Horses)*.

The researchers at the Centre publish the series *Scandinavistica Vilnensis* that has so far produced 9 volumes. The research activity of the staff is adequate, but could be somewhat higher and also more internationally oriented. According to the interviews with the staff, due to the heavy teaching load, the teachers cannot focus on research to the extent they would like to. During our discussions with staff it became apparent that the number of teaching hours on the programme is very high (most teachers teach on both BA and MA programmes), therefore, teachers cited their high teaching load as a major obstacle in achieving their research aspirations. A pilot scheme aimed at the reduction of contact hours and higher proportion of independent study hours for students may be implemented. This may help with higher staff research activity and outputs. As the Centre has a tradition of good interaction between students and teachers e.g. in extra-curricular activities and student conferences, creating research projects in lexicography, literature studies, translation or philology, involving MA students could also be a way of enhancing the teachers' research opportunities.

As the number of enrolled graduates in the two MA programmes offered by the Centre has been 8 during the last two years and has been raised to 10 in 2015, the number of the

teaching staff is more than adequate to ensure learning outcomes of the programme, although the same teachers also teach in the 3 other programmes. This allows the Centre to take into account the educational needs of every student and to ensure individual learning.

All in all, the number and qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. The international contacts of the teachers are an important addition to the permanent staff contributing to the quality in teaching, supervision, assessment, activities and conferences at the Centre.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

The studies of the MA Scandinavian programme take place in the old building of Vilnius University but the premises of the Centre of Scandinavian Studies (where most of the lectures and seminars are conducted) are new. According to the SER (p. 29) “Reconstruction of the premises and their adaptation for studies was carried out in the framework of the project “Development of Norwegian and Other Scandinavian Language Studies in Vilnius University in 2008–2010”. During the site visit, the team of experts was given a guided tour of the Centre’s premises and was impressed by them. The team visited various lectures rooms, staff offices, the main university library and the reading room of the Centre. The centre has 5 fully furnished modern rooms for the lectures and seminars. The teaching staff has shared rooms to prepare for the lectures or for the individual work. The students have a specially adapted room with a kitchenette (SER, p. 29), which was always full of students, chatting, relaxing, and revising when the team of experts visited the room. It was also commended during our meeting with the students.

Learning equipment for the MA programme is also impressive. The SER (p. 29) stated that the Centre has computerized rooms and an audio-visual laboratory. During the site visit, the experts saw that the rooms were fully equipped with computers; some rooms have TVs instead of multimedia. A new modern laboratory for the language teaching is to be opened later in 2015; the expert team saw that the room is under renovation. The centre has a WI-FI connection on its entire territory. A reading room and the Centre’s library are available for work. It is indicated in the SER (p. 29) that the library has 6 computerized working places for students.

The Centre’s library for the students of the programme is impressive in its number of resources which exceeds 13 thousand (in Lithuanian, English and various Scandinavian languages). The library benefitted from donations by social partners (Scandinavian organizations, embassies and visiting colleagues) during the period 2011–2014 (SER, p. 30). These were shown to the expert team. The university also has a range of electronic resources; it was learned during the visit that students have access to various electronic databases, accessible both from campus home PCs.

Although the facilities and learning resources of the Centre are very impressive, there is some room for improvement. We suggest that the percentage of modern monographs and journals on the theory of interpreting and translation should be increased (if funds permit) and valuable publications of the last 5–10 years added to the lists of recommended literature for appropriate modules (in some cases the latest sources on the lists were at least 10 years old!). Students would also benefit, if resources related to teaching methodology are expanded.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Vilnius University organizes its admissions process in accordance with the Rules of Admission to Second-cycle studies approved by VU Senate. The number of entrants for the MA programmes offered by the Centre has increased, in recent years – according to the SER (p. 32, table 6) both MA programmes had 4 students in 2011, while at the time of the visit the staff of the Centre informed the expert team that there were 2 students on the Scandinavian Studies programme and 5 on the Scandinavian and European Studies programme. However, all in all the number of entrants is still considerably low. During the meeting with the Scandinavian Centre's representatives it became apparent that the centre is aware of the current situation and relates it to the demand on a high level of Scandinavian language knowledge. The majority of entrants do not conform to high requirements of linguistic competence (SER, p. 33). During the meeting with the group responsible for the self-evaluation report it became apparent that the centre is willing to receive more BA students from the programme of Scandinavian studies (SER, p. 33). The administration of the programme stated that if the number of accepted students does not increase, the admissions to the programme will be organized every second year (see also SER, p. 33). The programme appears to be rather healthy, as the drop-out rate is considerably small: 17 out of 24 students on the two MA programmes administered by the Centre have accomplished their studies or are planning to do it later (SER, p. 32, Table 6).

Information about the study process (study calendar, timetables for lectures and examination sessions, optional courses and free electives, assessment procedure), opportunities for study periods abroad, tuition fees, student grants, funding of studies are provided by the Vice-dean for academic affairs and study coordinators for the Faculty. The timetable for the next semester is announced at the end of the current semester to allow the students to choose optional subjects in advance. However, during the meeting with the students, a complaint about inconvenient times and no chances to alter the timetable was expressed. Students of the joint programme of *Scandinavian and European studies* stated that the Institute of International Relations and Political Science organizes lectures in the evenings and students find it useful. The teaching staff of the centre is aware of the problem, but are not willing to adopt any changes.

However, relying on the data from the SER (p. 34), timetables of the lectures are quite flexible to suit individual student needs. According to the SER, VU Regulations provide guidance for students experiencing academic problems (p. 34). The team was satisfied to learn from the discussions with students and staff that the Study Support System generally works well. However, during the site visit, it became apparent that the students were not satisfied with the way in which the system of “individual choices” of elective modules is organized. The students pointed out that there are 30 modules listed as elective choices, but in reality the faculty limits the choice to 5 only. Nevertheless, students confirmed that they would like to have an opportunity to individualize their study process which they find useful as they have a chance to acquire additional skills and competences. The team of experts is of the opinion that certain internal changes could be made in order to reduce the existing list of optional modules, focusing more on students’ needs and interests. Maybe a survey among students could be carried out to see what they would like to put on the list. The site visit demonstrated that students have enough information about the study process at the Centre and the University and that the organization of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme.

The SER (p. 14 Table 1) states that one of the learning outcomes of the programme is development of cognitive and research skills. However, during the meeting with the administration it was stated that students are actually expected to conduct additional research but prefer to focus on the final thesis only. The teaching staff confirmed that the students are not willing to do additional research on the MA level. The same opinion was expressed by the students. The programme would benefit from more active student involvement in research. For instance, staff and students could be encouraged to produce joint publications.

During the meeting with the teaching staff it became apparent that the Scandinavian Centre supervises all theses from both *Scandinavian studies* and *Scandinavian and European studies* programmes.

Students have very good opportunities and are very much encouraged to participate in mobility programmes in the framework of the *Erasmus* or *Erasmus Mundus* programme or on the basis of bilateral co-operation agreements (SER, p. 37). Most of them use these opportunities to spend a semester or collect research material at the partner universities, which they find useful. The SER supports the evidence of mobility programmes functioning properly. It is indicated (p. 37) that the university has 111 bilateral agreements with other universities, 11 of those in Scandinavia. According to the SER (p. 37, Table 7) 7 students visited 4 universities in Scandinavia within the Erasmus, NordUd or Visby programme during 2011–2014 (these numbers cover both MA programmes as well as the BA programme in Scandinavian Studies). There also exists a possibility for Erasmus internships, which was used by one student during the

period. According to the SER (p. 37–38), the internship at Swedish Arts Council was mutually beneficial. However, the aims of this Erasmus internship are not stated clearly in the report. Nor it is clear how many of the 111 of Erasmus programmes at Vilnius University are Erasmus internship programmes.

The university provides good academic support. Teachers are available for consultations and their schedules are well organized and clear. Individual consultations are available with all members of the staff, also via email. During the visit it was learnt that students and teachers had developed a good working relationship with students indicating that one of the best things about the programme is the great relationship with the teaching staff. However, it also became clear that the support for students' independent work provided by the teachers is not governed by a definite system but is mostly done on an ad hoc basis. It is advised that the introduction of such a system be considered.

The university provides good social support as well, as students are often encouraged to do joint translations with the teaching staff. The University often organizes various events (SER, p. 38), which was confirmed by the students who are willing both to organize and participate in them. The expert team was satisfied with the way the extra-curricular activities are organised. Students participate in an annual spring research conference and have different opportunities to be engaged in cultural, sport and other activities offered by the VU Cultural Centre and Health and Sports Centre, Student Representative Office (faculty and central) and others. Students also have a voice in the programme development process, as they are represented in the group responsible for the SER writing. Students also stated that they had developed a close relationship with senior students, which they found very useful, as senior students help to cope with various problems, for instance choice of elective courses. On the other hand, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the system of scholarships, because there are very few chances to receive a scholarship, as the academic results have to be excellent. In fact, none of the students had ever received a scholarship for the academic excellence. On the other hand, relying on the SER (p. 39), socially disadvantaged, living alone, disabled, students whose working capacity is less than 45% or students whose parents are dead can apply for a social scholarship. Onetime social scholarship is available for students who experienced loss of a family member; scholarships for particularly good results in other spheres could be received. Full time students may apply for accommodation.

The assessment system (SER p. 36) (a 10 point system) is chosen by the teachers in accordance with anticipated learning outcomes and assessment methods. The assessment is objective. None of the students or alumni the expert team spoke with could remember a case when he/she had been assessed subjectively. The students also stated that regular feedback is provided

for all assessments in either oral or written form. However, there does not seem to be a formal system, which ensures the objectivity of assessment. A unified system of assessment feedback should be discussed and implemented. This could be modelled on the European moderation and double marking system, which aims to provide transparent and objective feedback by ensuring that all written assignments awarded top and failed grades are marked by a second tutor. A further 10 % sample of other grades is also marked by a second tutor. In case of large discrepancies between the marks by different tutors the marks should be moderated. The process of moderation/double marking should be documented (copies of moderated scripts and moderation sheets signed by tutors are usually kept for two years). In addition, many language departments across Europe choose to audio/video record students' oral performance, which is also moderated/double marked. The form of moderation sheets and procedures could be established internally.

We propose that the Centre run a pilot moderation project and then suggest it to the Senior management for university-wide implementation (as it is done in the majority of universities across Europe). Assessment criteria should be clearly stated in the course descriptions and on the feedback sheets for all assignments. These should be comparable across all languages taught in the Centre.

2.6. Programme management

VU regulations stipulate that study programmes must be renewed periodically and that their quality must be monitored regularly. The body responsible for ensuring and monitoring the quality of each programme is the Study Programme Committee, which reports to the Council of the Faculty at least once a year. The current Study Programme Committee for the Scandinavian Studies MA programme, approved in 2013, consists of 7 persons: 5 academic representatives from the Centre, 1 student and 1 representative for social partners (SER p. 40). During the meeting with the team responsible for writing the SER it was mentioned that the study programme is revised every year.

The SER (p. 41) states that the Centre's procedures for ensuring quality encompasses the practice that courses are mostly taught and students' performance assessed by several teachers. However, the evaluation team did not see concrete evidence of this during the meetings; assessments seem to be made by one lecturer only, at least to a great extent.

Another factor contributing to ensuring the quality of the studies is the fact that visiting teachers from partner institutions contribute to teaching in various ways. The SER (p. 56–60) lists a number of external lecturers who visited the centre for short periods in 2012–2014,

delivering lectures on both BA and MA level on a variety of topics.

According to the SER (p. 41) student surveys are regularly performed, either verbally or through questionnaires. At the end of each semester data from course evaluations are discussed by the Study Programme Committee and teachers may be asked to implement changes to their courses if deemed necessary. It was discovered during the meetings that although students regularly fill out questionnaires, they seldom receive any feedback afterwards. It might be useful to introduce staff-student liaison meetings, where student representatives from the various levels meet with staff and discuss the results of surveys and proposed changes to the programmes.

The provision of feedback is also said to involve social partners (SER p. 42), but it seems that the role of the social partners in this respect could be expanded. One possibility would be to challenge partners (e.g. companies based in or connected to Scandinavia) to provide scholarships to students with excellent results, thus at the same time involving these partners more closely in the workings of the Centre.

While a formal system for assessment and student feedback is in place, a clear impression from the meetings is that feedback is primarily given informally, through personal communication between teachers and students. The small student groups make this possible, and the close contact between teachers and students is generally a positive trait, but it should be emphasised that this does not eliminate the need for formalised channels of giving feedback. As mentioned in section 2.5., unified procedures for giving assessment feedback should be established, ensuring that such feedback is provided in a fair manner. Furthermore, the Centre could consider introducing a system of moderation marking (or second marking) of a sample of students' work at the end of each semester. This is standard procedure at many European universities as a tool for ensuring quality and fair assessment.

As mentioned in section 2.5., the number of students entering the two MA programmes is quite low – in 2011–2014 only 24 students in all entered one of the programmes (SER p. 32). During the meetings representatives from the Centre said that there should be at least 10 students on the MA programmes for them to be viable, but it is not clear to what extent this is realistic or what plans the Centre has to attract more students to the study programmes. A recommendation to the Centre is to create a clear promotion and information strategy with the goal of recruiting more MA students. This strategy should in the short term contain measures directed towards potential MA students at VU and elsewhere in Lithuania. One perspective target group is BA students at other departments with an interest in Scandinavian Studies; to bring their language skills up to the sufficient level they could e.g. attend certain BA courses. In a longer perspective the Centre should consider taking measures to attract students from other European countries,

using the Centre's strengths – such as its emphasis on traditional Scandinavian philology and historical disciplines – as sales arguments.

The expert team's meetings with the senior management of the Faculty and the management of the Centre clearly revealed that the two have different opinions on several matters pertaining to the Centre's study programmes. For example, the senior management do not consider the minor study programme very popular and would like to close it down, while the Centre's opinion is very strongly in favour of the minor programme. Furthermore, while the senior management is not satisfied with the research output of the staff at the Centre, the staff's view is that the heavy teaching load and lack of a system of sabbaticals make it difficult for them to do more research. Measures should be taken to improve the communication and cooperation between the senior management and the management of the Centre.

All in all the management of the Scandinavian Studies MA programme should be considered satisfactory, but there are areas where there is a clear potential for improvement.

2.7. Examples of excellence

There are several examples of excellence in the MA programme in *Scandinavian studies*.

From the very establishment, the Centre has shown an international orientation, and has taken part in international co-operation by inviting many distinguished visitors, both academic and non-academic, and this enables staff and students to be at the cutting edge of developments in Scandinavian Studies. Moreover, the staff of the centre has done a tremendous job applying for funding for various projects. This has also delivered very good results in terms of academic exchange and material situation. One area, where other institutions could get inspiration from the Centre, is the extra-curriculum activities, which are an excellent way to implement cultural aspects of the studies and also to open up the university for society in general. Close co-operation between lecturers and students is also an example of excellence.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

The aims and learning outcomes in the MA programme should be clarified by creating a clearly discernible profile with reference to the BA programme and with more focus on students' academic needs: e.g. theory of interpreting.

2.

The curriculum should be up-to-date with reference to optional subjects, and the course descriptions should match their implementation. Optional courses in e.g. sociolinguistics and multilingualism could be given in co-operation with other language departments, and contrastive linguistics could be given more focus in the curriculum.

3.

In the curriculum, the literature, culture and the translation elements of the programme are strong, however, sociolinguistic studies should also be introduced, particularly taking into account existing staff expertise in sociolinguistics at the Centre. These could be made into a special asset of the Scandinavian studies MA programme, for example, as a preparation for doctoral studies.

4.

Transparency and standardisation of assessment tasks and feedback should be discussed and implemented.

5.

Promotion strategies at the university, in Lithuania and abroad should be discussed and implemented.

IV. SUMMARY

The *Scandinavian Studies* MA programme is a solid, well delivered programme which is unique as a university programme in Lithuania. On the basis of the SER and the site visit, the evaluation team noted the following strengths and weaknesses. Below are also given some recommendations, which would help the MA programme to become a more balanced and attractive programme.

The aims of the programme and its learning outcomes are based on academic and professional requirements and take into account the great need of experts in Scandinavian languages and culture in Lithuania. However, they could be clarified in order to give the programme a clearer academic profile with a deeper socio-philological focus, distinguishing it more from the BA programme.

In the curriculum, the literature, culture and the translation elements of the programme are strong. However, competence in language policy, multilingualism and contrastive linguistics would make the students even more attractive on the labour market. The curricula and teaching methods are appropriate for ensuring that students reach the intended learning outcomes. There is a clear progression in linguistic competence levels and the students reach the high competence that is expected of them. Still, there is a clear potential for changing the curricula somewhat, making them more focussed on the students' needs. It is positive that the students are offered many specialty-related subjects, but they should be given a realistic picture of which optional subjects will be offered and at what time.

The number and qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes, and the international contacts of the teachers are an important addition to the teaching and supervising given at the Centre. The members of the academic staff are highly qualified specialists in relevant fields and some are active researchers in lexicography, philology, linguistics and literature. The research activity of the staff, although adequate, could possibly be increased and become somewhat more internationally oriented. In order to reduce the heavy teaching load, a pilot scheme aimed at the reduction of contact hours and a higher proportion of independent study hours for students may be implemented. The Centre has very good facilities for the students and the teachers with well-equipped lecture rooms, shared rooms for the teachers and a room of their own for the students. The learning and library resources are also good even though the recommended literature could be updated to some extent.

The admission requirements are well founded. However, if the number of entrants does not increase in the future, the programme should consider accepting students only every second year. The active and successful Erasmus student mobility is beneficial in many ways: it exposes

students not only to the culture and language of the surroundings but shows them variety in higher education in different types of assessments and forms of feedback. The Centre also gives the students good academic support: There is a close co-operation between teachers and the students are given individual attention. However, the programme seems to lack a unified system of assessment feedback. It is suggested that such a system should be discussed and a pilot project implemented. Although the Centre presently co-operates with several social partners, the role of these partners could profitably be expanded and formalised more.

As this is the only programme of its kind in Lithuania, it could promote itself more in Lithuania and also in Europe, attracting BA students from Lithuania and international universities.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Scandinavian studies* (state code – 621R61001) at Vilnius 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	2
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	2
6.	Programme management	2
	Total:	16

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

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

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

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

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V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vilniaus universiteto studijų programa *Skandinavistika* (valstybinis kodas – 621R61001) vertinama **teigiamai**.

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

* 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

Magistrantūros studijų programa *Skandinavistika* yra stipri, gerai vykdoma programa, viena tokia tarp Lietuvos universitetų. Vertinimo grupė, remdamasi savianalizės suvestine ir apsilankymu universitete, nurodo programos stiprybes ir silpnybes. Toliau dar pateikiama keletas rekomendacijų, kurios padėtų subalansuoti programą ir padaryti ją patrauklesnę.

Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai yra pagrįsti akademiniais ir profesiniais reikalavimais, atsižvelgiama į didelį skandinavų kalbų ir kultūros specialistų poreikį Lietuvoje. Tačiau jie galėtų būti išsamiau paaiškinti siekiant suteikti programai aiškesnį akademinį profilį su didesniu socialiniu-filologiniu akcentu ir labiau atskirti ją nuo bakalauro studijų programos.

Stipriosios šios programos studijų turinio dalys yra literatūra, kultūra ir vertimas. Tačiau studentų kompetencija kalbų politikos, daugiakalbystės ir gretinamosios kalbotyros srityje dar labiau padidintų jų patrauklumą darbo rinkoje. Studijų turinys ir taikomi studijų metodai užtikrina, kad studentai pasieks numatomus studijų rezultatus. Akivaizdžiai didėja lingvistinių kompetencijų lygis, studentai pasiekia aukštą lygį, kokio iš jų ir tikimasi. Tačiau vis dar yra galimybių keisti studijų turinį, kad jis būtų labiau orientuotas į studentų poreikius. Gerai tai, kad studentams siūloma daug su specialybe susijusių dalykų, bet reikėtų pateikti realistišką planą, kokie pasirenkamieji dalykai bus siūlomi ir kada.

Dėstytojų skaičius ir kvalifikacija yra pakankami numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti; dėstytojų tarptautiniai ryšiai labai prisideda prie Skandinavistikos centre teikiamų studijų ir vadovavimo praktikai. Akademinį personalą sudaro aukštos kvalifikacijos savo sričių specialistai, kai kurie aktyvūs leksikografijos, filologijos, kalbotyros, literatūros ir kt. sričių tyrėjai. Dėstytojų mokslinių tyrimų veikla pakankama, bet galėtų būti intensyvesnė ir tarptautiškesnė. Norint sumažinti didelį dėstytojų darbo krūvį, būtų galima įgyvendinti bandomąją schemą, kuria būtų siekiama sumažinti kontaktinių valandų skaičių ir daugiau valandų skirti savarankiškam studentų mokymuisi.

Centras turi labai geras patalpas studentams ir dėstytojams: gerai įrengtas auditorijas, bendras patalpas dėstytojams ir atskiras patalpas studentams. Metodiniai ir bibliotekos ištekliai taip pat labai geri, nors rekomenduojamą literatūrą būtų galima šiek tiek atnaujinti.

Priėmimo į studijas reikalavimai yra pagrįsti. Tačiau jeigu stojančiųjų skaičius ateityje nedidės, naujų studentų priėmimą galbūt reikėtų organizuoti kas dvejus metus. Aktyviai ir sėkmingai įgyvendinama studentų judumo programa *Erasmus* yra naudinga daugeliu aspektų: ji padeda studentams susipažinti ne tik su aplinkinių šalių kultūra ir kalba, bet ir su įvairiomis aukštosiomis mokyklomis, turinčiomis savo vertinimo būdus ir grįžtamojo ryšio formas. Be to, centras teikia savo studentams gerą akademinę paramą. Dėstytojai glaudžiai bendradarbiauja tarpusavyje ir skiria daug dėmesio kiekvienam studentui. Tačiau, atrodo, nėra bendros įvertinimų grįžtamojo ryšio sistemos. Siūloma aptarti šios sistemos sukūrimo ir bandomojo projekto įgyvendinimo galimybę. Šiuo metu centras bendradarbiauja su kai kuriais socialiniais partneriais, bet būtų naudinga išplėsti ir formalizuoti partnerių vaidmenį.

Kadangi ši programa – vienintelė tokia Lietuvoje, ji galėtų būti daugiau reklamuojama Lietuvoje ir Europoje, siekiant pritraukti Lietuvos ir tarptautinių universitetų studentų.

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III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1.

Reikėtų aiškiau apibrėžti magistrantūros studijų programos tikslus ir numatomus studijų rezultatus, kad ji aiškiai skirtųsi nuo bakalauro studijų programos, daugiau akcentuojant studentų akademinis poreikius, pvz., vertimo teoriją.

2.

Studijų turinį reikėtų atnaujinti turint omenyje pasirenkamuosius dalykus, o dalykų aprašai turėtų atitikti jų įgyvendinimą. Pasirenkamieji dalykai, pvz., sociolingvistika ir daugiakalbystė, galėtų būti dėstomi kartu su kitomis kalbų katedromis. Daugiau dėmesio studijų turinyje galėtų būti skiriama gretinamajai kalbotyrai.

3.

Stipriosios šios programos studijų turinio dalys yra literatūra, kultūra ir vertimas, tačiau reikėtų įtraukti ir sociolingvistikos studijas, ypač atsižvelgiant į centro dėstytojų kompetenciją sociolingvistikos srityje. Tai galėtų tapti ypatingu magistrantūros studijų programos *Skandinavistika* turtu, pavyzdžiui, rengiant doktorantūros studijoms.

4.

Reikėtų apsvarstyti ir išspręsti vertinimo užduočių ir grįžtamojo ryšio aiškumo ir standartizavimo klausimą.

5.

Reikėtų apsvarstyti ir įgyvendinti programos reklamavimo universitete, Lietuvoje ir užsienyje strategijas.

<...>
