STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *TARPTAUTINIAI SANTYKIAI IR DIPLOMATIJA (valstybinis kodas - 621L20014)*
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY* (*state code - 621L20014*)
STUDY PROGRAMME**
at Vilnius University

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

Vilnius
2016

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	*Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija*
Valstybinis kodas	621L20014
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Politikos mokslai
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Politikos mokslų magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2014-01-08

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INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	*International Relations and Diplomacy*
State code	621L20014
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Political Science
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 of Political Science
Date of registration of the study programme	2014-01-08

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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.	Selection of research publications of the academic staff
2.	Development plan of Vilnius university 2015-2017
3.	Methodological requirements for written assignments and final theses of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, VU
4.	Alumni feedback survey results

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

Vilnius University (hereinafter also University or VU), founded in 1579, is the oldest and largest institution of higher education in Lithuania. At present, the University has about 3670 employees and 21 000 students. The University implements study programmes of three study cycles in the areas of the humanities, social, physical, biomedical and technological sciences; students may enrol in more than 70 bachelor study programmes, 110 master and integrated study programmes and almost 30 doctoral study programmes.

The Institute of International Relations and Political Science (hereinafter also IIRPS or Institute) is a core academic unit of Vilnius University that implements 1 first cycle (Political Science), 6 second cycle (*International Relations and Diplomacy*, *European Studies*, *Contemporary Politics*, *Public Policy Analysis*, and *Eastern European and Russian Studies)* and 1 third cycle (*Political Science)* study programmes. The Institute has about 60 staff members and 660 students. The master programme of International Relations and Diplomacy (hereinafter also IRD/SP or Programme) has been taught since 1997. In 2013, the Programme has been substantially

reorganized and went through the registration procedure. It has been accredited until July 1st, 2016. IRD/SP has 49 students (2015) taught by 16 academic staff members.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *20th September, 2016.*

1. **Prof. Anu Toots (team leader)**, *Professor of Social Policy, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia;*
2. **Dr. Stefan Ganzle,** *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Norway;*
3. **Prof. Geoffrey Swain,** *Honorary Professor, Emeritus, University of Glasgow, Professor of European History, University of the West of England (until 2006), United Kingdom;*
4. **Ms. Judita Akromienė,** *director of public organization "Eurohouse", Lithuania;*
5. **Ms. Julija Stanaitytė,** *student of Kaunas University of Technology study programme Human Resource Management, Lithuania.*

Evaluation coordinator – Ms. Dovilė Žeimienė

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

According to the SER, the Master programme in *International Relations and Diplomacy* has been developed "to prepare high level professionals, offering them knowledge and skills, necessary for a foreign policy analysis and a good understanding of international relations and diplomacy". The programme focuses on two aspects considered important - for an understanding of international relations and the conduct of foreign policy analysis, namely security related issues and diplomacy. As a result, the core and option structure is formed so as to develop that knowledge and those competences relevant to these two fields.

As the SER makes clear, the learning outcomes and competences of the study programme take into account the *Description of Study Cycles* (approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011 November 21, No. V-2212), which include comprehensive theoretical knowledge of the discipline and ability to apply this knowledge (study outcomes No. 3.1,3,2,5.1,8.1), advanced research skills (study outcomes No.1,1, 2.2,3.1,5.2,8.1), special abilities such as to provide sound, professional recommendations of international politics and foreign policy formation processes and ability to creatively solve specific practical issues (study outcome No. 2.1,2.2,3.1,4.1,), social abilities (study outcomes No. 1.2,3.2), ability to work independently and take responsibility for one's actions (study outcomes No. 1.1). Reference has also been made to the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Political Science* approved by Order No V-828 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (23rd of July 2015), which specifies that upon completion of the second cycle studies of the study field of Political Science, among other skills, students should have a specific knowledge of the ongoing scientific discussion in the selected political science specialisation (study outcomes No. 4.1-5.2,8.1), to be able to implement research projects of political phenomena, using methodological approaches and means available in the chosen field of specialisation (study outcomes No.

2.2,4.1-5.2,8.1); to communicate correctly in the official language and one of foreign languages in writing and orally both with the experts in the field and with the persons who are not professional experts in that field (study outcome No. 1.2,2.2).

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible. The generic and subject-specific competences and learning outcomes are set out clearly in Table 1 of the SER, and this is broken down to course level in the Study Plan Matrix on pp. 13-14. Within the SER, then, every effort has been made to ensure that the programme's aims and learning outcomes are consciously developed throughout the programme. The SER (chapter 1.2) outlines how the study programmes and their learning outcomes are made available on the university and institute websites, as well as through admission initiatives. During the visit, no student raised the invisibility of the programme as an issue.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market. As the SER makes clear, this is a well-established programme which has a long history of providing highly qualified graduates for Lithuania's diplomatic service and other foreign policy actors. Although other institutions offer competing programmes, the strong element of security studies in this programme clearly gives it a special edge. During the visit, the meeting with alumni reinforced the picture of the close relationship which exists between this programme and those working in the world of foreign policy analysis, while the social partners present were clearly very active in such aspects as the defence of the Master thesis, and generally committed to the programme. The social partners welcomed the focus on security.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered. The Programme offers a combination of courses which are all of Master level in terms of the reading and participation expected, and in the way that they provide training in terms of methodology and research techniques for the final thesis. It is clear from the staff CVs that tutors are teaching according to their research expertise. The list of dissertations written and the quality of the final dissertations themselves show clearly that students are expected to work at master's quality and are doing so. This impression based on self-evaluation report was reinforced by the visit. The students could appreciate the difference between masters and bachelors study, noting that their current courses were "challenging" and "eye opening" providing the opportunity to systematise the knowledge gained from undergraduate studies. They particularly welcomed some of the "non-traditional" teaching methods. Comments from alumni were similarly positive, noting how "everything in political science in Lithuania happens here" and that this was "a life-changing institution". Social partners commented that the strengths of the graduates of this programme were that students "were able to write" and had "the ability to adapt to an unfamiliar topic".

The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and qualifications offered are compatible with each other. The programme offers what it promises, with no mismatch between the learning outcomes, content and qualifications. Until September 2016, the programme was divided in two separate modules: Diplomacy and Security, which is mirrored also in the title of the SP. September 2016 onwards there is now formal specialisation, but the content of the programme is clearly build on these two focuses. Thus, the name of the SP and it content are well compatible. The recent merge of modules was strongly welcomed by the alumni as "a timely reform" and "a good approach to combine security and diplomacy studies".

2.2. Curriculum design

The study programme design meets the legal requirements in terms of volume of the programme, credits, allocated to the MA thesis and focus on the study filed. At the same time, there is a tendency to keep the design more strict than prescribed by national standard. The IRD/SP has assigned 91% to the compulsory subjects, and 9% to electives. Most of subjects (85 ECTS) are within the field of Political Science, which is in concordance with the programme aims and legal requirements but exceeds significantly the national requirement (no less than 60 ECTS). Only one subject (5 ECTS) is allocated to the law that provides quite limited opportunities to understand interdisciplinarity. The share of individual work also significantly exceeds the legal standard (no less than 30%). According to the SER (p.18, table 3) in IRD/SP the individual work composes for compulsory courses 80% at average. This kind of curriculum design presumes that: a) students are well familiarised with self-guided leaning and possess relevant skills from the very beginning of their studies; b) teaching staff is well skilled in guiding extensive amount of individual work. During the site visit the expert panel made sure that both students and staff feel themselves confident in having such high portion of individual reading. One can conclude that "focus on lecturer guided self-study and development of the skills of autonomous study", declared as one of the key principles of TLA strategy is being successfully implemented into curriculum design.

Study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly across the three semesters, the last semester is devoted to MA thesis preparation and writing. The content of compulsory subjects is not repetitive and covers all main aspects of the IRD and it processes. The programme has been revised in 2016 and currently two different versions of the study plan are in effect. Second year students have still two modules – Security Module and Diplomacy Module and most of the subjects are allocated within the modules. The choice of electives is limited to 2 subjects and 10 ECTS in total during 3rd and 4th semesters. Modular structure has been abolished in recent SP reform and all students admitted in 2016 have the same list of compulsory subjects and institute-wide list of electives. The proportion of compulsory and elective subjects is now better balanced across the semesters. Also, the choice of electives is wider – 25 ECTS and 5 courses out of 27. Students met by the experts expressed their strong support to the new programme design that gives them more freedom in shaping their individual profile. The study load is spread equally across the semesters, there is 5 subjects during first, second and third semester; fourth semester is devoted to the MA thesis.

The content of the subjects is adequate to the second cycle programmes; there are no introductory or very basic courses. Several compulsory courses include in their titles keywords such as *theories, problems, analysis* that indicates analytical and problem-driven approach required for the second cycle study programmes. Members of the student panel who had graduated from the relevant undergraduate programme at IIRPS (4 persons out of 5) confirmed that graduate studies are "more advanced" and do not repeat some previous courses. Novel knowledge and high academic challenge have been mentioned by students among the most positive features of the programme. MA seminars (15 credits in total, 5 credits each semester) serve as a good arena to develop skills of independent research and prepare for successful thesis writing. In order to achieve these goals students' work in Master's seminars comprises individual research work; work with a tutor as well as in the group of students and lecturers (http://www.tspmi.vu.lt/en/students/useful-information/methodical-requirements)

The content and methods of compulsory and elective courses provide opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes. Besides lectures, oriented mainly towards theoretical knowledge, strong emphasis is put on seminars and individual work. As evidenced by the SER, course descriptions and interviews, the dominant learning tool is critical reading. Students estimate the

reading workload (25-50 pp per seminar class) as challenging, but interesting and enriching. Group work, presentations and writing tasks are also often and efficiently practiced as became clear in interviews with students and employers. "These students have writing skills, which is essential in public institutions", one of the social partners said. The SP documents and interviewed parties stressed the importance of developing research skills. Since the evaluation was performed in time when the curriculum reform is still on the way, 1st year and 2nd year students had different arrangements for preparing their final thesis. 2nd year students started working on their master thesis in the first year during the course *International Relations Theories and Research Methods*,. 1st year students had simply the course *International Relations Theories*. As it was explained at site visits, every subject includes some sort of research methods. Students, met by the experts confirmed that "teachers tell what kind of methods is appropriate in this particular area". The SER (p.19) describes that in the 2016 reform "the course *Introduction to Political Science Research* has been made optional, bearing in mind that many students with political science background might find enough of one course on the theories and methodology". As the review panel learned during the interviews the function of this course is mainly to level up those students who do not have BA in political science. Moving the compulsory subject to the status of an elective may pose certain risks on achieving skills' related learning outcomes at the level appropriate for second cycle studies. Similar concern has been voiced by the students' and employers' panels. Employers stressed especially the need to strengthen mastery of quantitative methods and applied statistics.

Integration of students with various backgrounds asks for more complex approach than levelling the mastery of research skills only. The SER (p.16) spells it as "one of the biggest concerns". Based on the interviews it can be concluded that currently the problem is addressed via individual consultations which was highly appreciated by the students. However, more systematic and standardised approach to explaining the availability of bridging courses is recommended. Presently, nor the SP neither the study plan specify, whether and which bridging courses are available.

The scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. The programme provides opportunities to gain good knowledge of classical and modern theories of International Relations and ability to apply them. Moreover, generic skills are developed within various subject specific courses. The list of electives provides a wide range of options across various subtopics in political science. As explained in SER, as the result of recent reform all MA level SPs have now the same list of electives for all students within the Institute. This decision was highly appreciated by strong majority of interviewed students and alumni. As the reform is in its very beginnings, a close attention should be paid that students will receive appropriate guidance in selecting electives that best contribute to their academic profiling. Graduates of the IRD should have excellent command of foreign language(s). Some of the optional courses are offered in English (SER, p.19), that certainly contributes to this aim. Also, as became clear during interviews, the seminar reading is overwhelmingly in English. Yet, both alumni and employers recommended including more language courses (English, Russian) into programme in order to enhance the employability of graduates.

The content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in political science and international relations. Core courses have a good selection of various sources, both monographs and peer reviewed journal articles. However, the latest academic publications (2010 onwards) are quite rare.

2.3. Teaching staff

The study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements. In several criteria the national requirements are exceeded. This is true for the percent of lecturers with a doctoral degree (81% against 80% required), congruence of teaching and research profiles (77% against 60%), ECTS taught by professors (33% against 20%), share of experts with practical work experience (17%, against 40% as upper limit allowed).

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. Teaching staff is delivering lectures and seminars in the area that corresponds to their qualification and research area. The SER (p. 4) lists among the main research areas of the Institute "changes in international politics" that builds a solid premise to link research and teaching activities of the staff members. A strong majority of them are active in doing research projects and publishing research results what ensures their competence in supervising students' research work.

The number of the teaching staff is large enough to ensure learning outcomes. IRD/SP is implemented by 16 academic staff members, including 2 full professors, 3 associate professors, 8 lecturers with PhD degree and 3 assistants. This allows individual approach to students and efficient supervision of seminars, course works and final theses.

The proportion of students to teaching staff is very low (between 4 and 10 to one) in that SP, but somewhat higher if other IIRPS MA programmes are taken into account. Thus, the advantages of very favourite student - teacher ratio bears also the risk of staff cuts due to the low number of students. Thus, some strategic plans are needed to increase the number of students and possible to widen the international study options.

The teaching staff turnover has been minimal and ensures an adequate provision of the programme. The age distribution of staff is normal, majority of lecturers being below 54. The turnover has been somewhat higher for junior staff, which may be associated with the disproportional (compared to others) teaching workload (SER, p.23, Table 9). However, during the site visit the expert panel became convinced that the workload is not a common problem and the University allows substantial degree of flexibility and individual approach in this matter.

The VU and IIRPS create adequate conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff. Standard requirements for academic positions are firmly kept, but personal preferences and carrier plans are also taken into account. Every staff member can annually negotiate his/her work plan and chose to orient himself/herself whether more towards research or towards teaching. Such a personal approach has been highly appreciated by the academic staff. Since 2004 IIRPS applies the System of Motivation Promotion, which is intended to encourage teachers to increase their qualification. Each high rank scientific publication results in financial premium for the employee. Staff members, met by the panel were well aware of the system and found it being transparent, fair and efficient. To enhance teaching skills of the academic staff, the IIRPS organises methodical and didactical seminars (Moodle, problem based learning, agent based learning, flipped classroom). As SER (p.23) describes, previously the professional development depended to a significant extent on individual initiative, but since 2016 IIRP organises regular training seminars (two to four times during the semester) for the employees. This is clearly a positive development.

Erasmus exchange for lecturers is available, but some other options (ECPR methods' schools, visiting fellowship in Harvard University) seem to be more popular. There is no tradition of a regular sabbatical at the Institute, but both administration and staff members appreciated the

current tailor made approach. No complains on limitations or restrictions of academic mobility or conference participation have been heard during the site visit.

The teaching staff of the programme is widely involved in research related to the study programme under review. According to SER (p.23, table 10), in 2013-2015 the academic staff of IRD programme published 42 articles and book chapters, and 7 books. This is quite substantial number. Most of articles have appeared in Lithuanian academic journals and edited volumes, some in top level international academic journals or publishing houses (*Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *European Policy Studies*; Springer, Elsevier). The quantity and quality of publications varies widely across the staff members. The average statistical estimate is less than 1 article per person annually (which is rather modest). Analysis of the CVs reveals that majority of international research output is authored by 2 staff members only (Vilpišauskas, Šešelgytė). Thus, more effort is needed to increase the number and expand the authorship of international publications. The recently introduced System of Motivation Promotion may well serve this purpose; another tool can be more active involvement of academic staff in international research projects.

Currently 5 national and 1 international R&D projects have been implemented by the IRD/SP academic staff in 2012-15. As the interviews revealed, researchers often face a hard trade-off between applied analyses (which is in high demand) and academic research. "Policy reports may hijack the academic research", as one of the interview panellists put it. While recognising the need to serve the domestic society the recommendation is to put more efforts on applying for larger international and EU research funds that will increase international visibility and position of the IIRPS.

2.4. Facilities and Learning Resources

All of the lectures and workshops of the programme are arranged in the premises of the Institute. The premises and facilities for studies have been recently renovated and have basic equipment, i.e. the computer and multimedia projector. There are different types of rooms, both auditoriums and classrooms, available for the programme students since the classes take place in the evenings. Considering that the student groups are small (22 to 27), the size of rooms seems adequate. As pointed out in SER, until now the issue of a fewer number of classrooms suitable for seminars and group discussions seems to be resolved by the administration by approaching the needs of individual lecturers. Still, some students indicated the need of more classrooms suitable for group work. In addition, the Institute administration has pointed out that the general availability of classes might be more problematic in the coming years with a need to prolong classes for BA students due to increased admission.

The library is located in the premises of the Institute. It is rather small and closes at 6 pm.

However, there are a few other spaces available for students' individual and group work, in particular two computer rooms with 50 computers open throughout the day and the winter garden. There are also other learning spaces provided by Vilnius University for its academic community, namely the Vilnius University library, located within walking distance from the Institute premises, that is open till 9 pm and the National Open Access Centre of Academic Communication and Information (Vilnius University), open 24 hours a day.

Apart from teaching and learning materials accessible to the students from the Institute library, they have also access to the materials of the Library of the Lithuanian Open Society Fund (which boasts the richest social sciences library in the region and contains 40 000 publications in English, Lithuanian, French, German and Russian languages) and Vilnius University Library

(which subscribes major international digital academic databases such as JSTOR, Sage, Willey Online Library). The teachers confirmed that the yearly budget allocated to update the materials (700 to 750 EUR) satisfies their needs (materials are updated twice a year). Additionally, literature resources are acquired from ongoing research projects.

Usually, the reading materials are provided to students electronically by lecturers via email, Moodle, or student by representatives. Although the academic personnel is encouraged to use Moodle (last spring a training was organized for them), it is not widely used yet (students indicated 3 courses provided on this platform).

As pointed out in the self-evaluation report, the absence of wireless internet in the premises of the Institute (Eduroam is accessible only in the library) is a drawback. It is recommended to address this issue at an earliest convenience and secure necessary funding from the central office of Vilnius University.

Although the programme does not include a professional internship into the official student's workload, students have quite actively participated in Erasmus+ program (5 students conducted an internship during the reported period). The facilitating factors behind that are not clear, however, some of the reasons might be that some optional courses are offered in English and some Erasmus students participating in classes (which makes national students more confident for learning and living in multicultural and international study environment).

As stated in SER, students are offered also alternative possibilities to develop their practical skills during placements in Vilnius based think tanks or international organisations. However, these measures are implemented on individual or voluntary basis and might lack coherency with the learning outcomes of the study programme. As pointed out by alumni and social partners, the Institute should diversify the network of partner institutions - national, foreign and international. The expansion of partnership network will speed up attractive carrier paths of graduates, especially in perspective of growing international competition at the high end jobs.

2.5. Study process and student performance assessment

Admission requirements are well- founded and publicly available on the main IIRS webpage and in the Rules of Admission to the Second – cycle Study Programmes of Vilnius University. The admission grade mostly depends on the entrance exam (75%) and an average of grades from diploma supplement (25%). List of recommended literature for the preparation of exam are publicly available and easy to find at IIRS webpage. This type of admission, as explained in SER and supported by students and alumni, allows effective selection for the best students who are highly motivated and have basic knowledge of international relations. Data provided in SER (p.32) supports the statement that student's enrolment in IRD/SP is quite stable and dropout rate remained quite small across the years. In conclusion, the programme could be defined as well-founded and clear for every potential student.

The organization of study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievements of the learning outcomes. Overall, the organisation of the study process is clear and effective. Students are satisfied with all the information and help they get from lecturers, study programme administrator, and study programme committee. All relevant information - timetables, lecturers' contact hours, course descriptors etc., are publicly available on IIRS website. The programme flexibility and administration's willingness to provide help have been positively mentioned by students, who, as a rule work full time. The possibility to have classes after workday was considered as a positive arrangement. Moreover, every lecturer presents relevant information about his course including learning outcomes, assessment, themes of classes in the course description. Students and alumni mentioned that even though the workload is

challenging and they have a lot of individual preparation for seminars (about 4 h per seminar), it is manageable. Students were very positive about the book club, where they discuss different chapters of reading materials. In seminars various learning methods are used: group work, debates, simulation and etc. Furthermore, lecturers try to provide information and study material in different ways, including Moodle platform, which is a positive improvement. Generally, the review panel was convinced that students are well satisfied with the manner the SP is managed and feel enthusiastic about recent changes implemented since fall 2016.

Student engagement into research has not gained substantial results so far. SER (p.35) highlights that IIRPS aims to encourage student participation in research activities, but there was only couple examples of student involvement. An IIRP Students' Research Association exists, and one student mentioned being involved in association's activities. Even though lecturers present the possibilities to do research, majority of students are focusing just on their master thesis as full time jobs do not leave much room for any extra activities. The overview of master thesis revealed that the level is high, which was evidenced also by substantial proportion of high grades. Thus, the Institute should consider what possibilities exist in advancing the existing high academic potential of the students.

Students have good opportunities to participate in student mobility programs for studies or internship. Statistics provided in SER (p. 38) reveals that the numbers of student mobility are quite high for second cycle studies. In 2015, 9 students took the opportunity to go abroad, which is almost 20% of IRD/SP students. Furthermore, students mentioned that if they are not going during study period abroad, there is a possibility to go after graduation for internship. Mobility of the students, especially for this programme, is a good possibility to improve the language skills so important for this field of employment. To summarize, even though the numbers of students going abroad are quite high, internationalisation of the programme could be improved even more by having more visiting lecturers and more courses in English as social partners and alumni suggested.

Students have adequate academic and social support from the university staff. Teaching staff is available for consultations, their schedules are clear and could be easily found at the website. Besides that, students can get all relevant information from the study programme administrator. Administration support is well-organised and implemented through intense and regular communication. Students confirmed that they are familiar with all the information about academic support, by contacting with teachers during their consultation time. Furthermore, students have mentors (a senior student), who help first-year students with all questions and problems, and a group representative who meets the administration once per semester. Besides social support students are also eligible for university and state scholarships.

The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. Assessment criteria are presented by lecturers during the first class and also states in the course descriptions, which are publicly available on IIRS webpage. Assessment criteria are oriented towards subject specific and general learning outcomes, which support achievement of SP learning outcomes. Interviewed students told that lecturers involve them in discussing the assessment process and sharing their thoughts about assessment components. Different assessment methods are being used in seminars such as active participation, essays, group or individual projects; the final form of assessment is usually exam. Around 50 % of the grade is composed of seminars participation, which students defined as positive thing, because in seminars students can get better understanding about the topics and material they have red. In conclusion, the assessment system and principles are adequate, clear and positively evaluated by the students.

Professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme provider's expectations. Data provided in SER (p.40), interviews with alumni, students and social partners support this conclusion. Majority of graduates work in public sector or NGO's, which are related with international activities in positions of diplomats, journalists, public servants and experts.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the IRD/SP are clearly allocated. The bodies governing the study programme management are in place and operate in line with the VU mission statement and other university documents dealing with issues of quality insurance, such as the Standards and *Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and the *Vilnius University Quality Manual*. These documents are publicly available at http://www.kvc.cr.vu.lt/site/?q=node/90.

According to the SER, the Vilnius University (VU) is active in the professional development of its academic staff. Despite the efforts in ensuring the professional development of its academic staff, however, discussions with faculty have revealed that faculty development courses are offered on an *ad-hoc* basis and lack an overall long-term strategic perspective.

The Study Programme Committee (SPC) and the Faculty Council (FC) are responsible for the management of the study programme. The SPC is the key body at the institute-level and is accountable to the FC. The SPC brings together representatives from academic staff, students and social partners. The university highly values input from stakeholders – practitioners from the public sector – for the development of the programmes.

The SPC has also been central in providing the self-evaluation of the programme. According to SPC members, the meetings are held regularly complemented by "ad-hoc arrangements"; meetings also rely on communication inside the members of the SPC. In its work, the SPC can rely on a highly efficient study department and strong involvement of social partners. As a diplomat, the IRD's social partner provides a close link to the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of the most popular employers for students of the IRD/SP.

The information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed both centrally by the Administration of Studies as well as by individual study programmes. The administration relies on the VU information system of studies which also collects information about the implementation of the study programme. Two feedback systems are in place: one managed by the VU, and another, by the IIRPS.

The outcomes of internal and external evaluation of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme. Stakeholders, such as social partners, students and alumni, reported satisfaction with the 2016/17 curriculum reforms allowing students to opt from an institute-wide pool of electives. Students have perceived this change as a consequence of their input and feedback.

The evaluation and improvement processes involve various stakeholders, including, in particular, social partners. At VU, social partners are members of the board of trustees and are involved in the SP Committee and the Commission of Final Thesis Defence. Social partners have expressed satisfaction with taking part in these activities. In addition, partners such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Defence have not only been instrumental in providing high-quality traineeships to the students, they often serve as employers of currently involved MA students and future graduates. The social partners are very pleased with the strengthening of methodological training as part of the study programme.

Overall, the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient. . The SPC and the Administration work continuously on improving the measurement instrument and on encouraging students' participation in surveys. The SPC has already started to address the low response rate among students by distributing and collecting questionnaires during a class toward the end of a semester. By this change it is emphasised that regular feedback is an integral element of quality management in the study programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Institute is strongly recommended to rethink the status and logic of research methods' subjects in the academic programme. The purpose of methods' subjects is to ensure sound research skills adequate to the second-cycle studies for every graduate not just levelling up the basic knowledge of admitted students.

2. The review panel advises the Institute and SP Committee to work towards making the programme more international, e.g. expanding the number of courses available in English and adding foreign languages as electives into academic programme.

3. The Institute is recommended to ensure strategic and long-term outlook of academic staff development, e.g. provide training on academic writing in English and grant writing; promote and recognise effective participation of faculty in professional development courses. A closer monitoring of the balance between staff involvement in think tank activities and high level academic research is also advised.

4. The review panel advises the Institute and SP Committee to expand network of social partners beyond the circle of those who currently employ IIRPS students and graduates.

5. The Institute is recommended to streamline the student evaluation system and work towards making the evaluation process a truly interactive and ongoing communication between the lecturers and students as part of the programme's quality assurance.

IV. SUMMARY

The Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS) is responsible for six MA-level study programmes covering areas of Contemporary Politics, Eastern European and Russian Studies, International Relations and Diplomacy, Public Policy Analysis, European Studies and Politics and Media. The SP *International Relations and Diplomacy* (IRD/SP) has been one out of five under review.

IRD/SP is the oldest academic programme in the Institute despite the fact that it has been registered in 2014. It has clearly contributed to many of its strengths, such as highly qualified staff, stabile number of students, good literature resources, well established study guidelines and standards, and hard-work-oriented study culture. Whilst preserving valuable traditions, the study programme is kept up to date in terms of content and design. Beginning from the academic year 2016/17, several important changes of the study programme have been implemented, including, in particular, the dissolution of modular structure. One of the central objectives of the reform is to allow students choosing from a wider pool of electives. MA students are thus granted greater flexibility in the sharpening their individual study profile or, alternatively in broadening their disciplinary perspective. So far, the reform enjoys strong support by all parties involved – students, teachers, alumni and employers. However, clearly, the effects of these reforms need to be closely monitored and evaluated over the next few years

The key objective of the *International Relations and Diplomacy* programme is "to prepare high level professionals, offering them knowledge and skills, necessary for a foreign policy analysis and a good understanding of international relations and diplomacy". The core and option structure is formed so as to develop that knowledge and the competences relevant to the fields of international relations and diplomacy.

The review panel is positive about the 'learning outcomes' approach underlying the programme. Programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market. The programme offers what it promises, with no mismatch between the learning outcomes, content and qualifications.

The content of the study subjects is consistent with the type and level of the studies and are appropriate for the achievement of the learning outcomes. Keeping in mind the future employment areas of graduates it is advised to include more study subjects in English, or add foreign language courses into the list of electives.

A real concern for the review panel is the degradation of the research methods subjects to an option mainly aimed at levelling up the students without a bachelor degree in Political Science. Staff did not perceive this to be a problem, but the review panel believes that the students might be confronted with a lack of methodological, analytical and data handling skills when starting their employment. Similar concern has been voiced by employers and some students and alumni. Explicit comprehensive and compulsory research training is almost absent in the programme. Based on these observations, the expert panel advises the management to add more research subjects to the programme,

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. The staff composition encompasses both theoretical and practical expertise and covers all major topics of the programme. The staff has high rates of international academic exchange and publishes extensively in the area of their teaching. The review panel points out, that national publications dominate over international ones and publishing activity is highly unequally distributed across staff members. Based on these observations, the expert panel advises the management to continue developing further relevant incentives, set up with the System of Motivation Promotion in early 2016. Besides these incentive structures, it is recommended to pay more attention to the comprehensive and long-term outlook of academic staff development, which includes regular in service training, guidance in project writing, planning of academic exchange and involvement in academic networks. Putting it short, current ad hoc arrangement driven by individual initiatives needs to be replaced by a coordinated system driven by organisational developmental goals.

Classrooms, computer facilities, software and media equipment of IIRPS are sufficient both in their size and quality. The library is not large, but handy. Moreover - electronic scientific databases are widely accessible and regularly used in the study process. Absence of the Wi-Fi in the Institute's building may pose some limitations to the internet based learning. The review panel believes that new social media tools (such as Facebook) cannot entirely compensate limited access to the Internet, as well as very modest use of web-based learning platforms (such as Moodle).

Infrastructure for group work is somewhat limited. It is necessary to extend the number of small classrooms, computer labs and team-work spaces. The review panel advises the management to invest in facilities and digital learning resources, in particular infrastructure for group work and one-stop-shop learning platforms.

The admission requirements are well-specified. The university has implemented quality assurance procedures, including student feedback through regularly held surveys. The general assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. Regarding the assessment of seminar sessions there are discrepancies across the subjects in terms of balance between the assignments and rewards. The assessment of seminars was felt by students as not always fair across subject. Based on these observations the review panel advises to

professionalise the assessment procedures including some formal rules about allocating hours and rewards for typical work tasks.

The willingness of the social partners to contribute to the programme is impressive. They are involved in programme development, final theses defence, and to a lesser extent in teaching and mentoring. In order to successfully meet future challenges (such as the increasing competition in higher education and at the labour market) the expert panel recommends the IIRPS stepping out of the "conformity zone" where the IRD/SP is currently positioned, and to find novel collaboration partners both at domestic, regional and international arena.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *International Relations and Diplomacy* (state code – 621L20014) 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	4
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	4
6.	Programme management	4
	Total:	**22**

*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. Anu Toots
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Dr. Stefan Ganzle
	Prof. Geoffrey Swain
	Ms. Judita Akromienė
	Ms. Julija Stanaitytė

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
TARPTAUTINIAI SANTYKIAI IR DIPLOMATIJA **(VALSTYBINIS KODAS –
621L20014) 2016-11-10 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-224 IŠRAŠAS**

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V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vilniaus universiteto studijų programa *Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija* (valstybinis kodas –
621L20014) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	4
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	4
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	4
6.	Programos vadyba	4
	Iš viso:	22

* 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)

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IV. SANTRAUKA

Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas (*TSPMI*) yra atsakingas už šešias
magistrantūros studijų programas, apimančias šias sritis: *šiuolaikinės politikos studijos, rytų
Europos ir Rusijos studijos, tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija, viešosios politikos analizė,
Europos studijos* ir *politika ir medijos.* Studijų programa *Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija*
yra viena iš penkių programų, kurios buvo vertinamos.

Studijų programa *Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija* yra seniausia Instituto studijų programa,
nepaisant to, kad įregistruota 2014 m. Tai akivaizdžiai prisidėjo prie šių jos stiprybių: aukštos
kvalifikacijos darbuotojai, pastovus studentų skaičius, geri literatūros ištekliai, tvirtos studijų
gairės ir standartai, į sunkų darbą (pastangas) orientuota studijų kultūra. Programos turinys ir
sandara nuolat atnaujinami kartu išsaugant vertingas tradicijas. Pradedant 2016–2017
akademiniais metais atlikti keli svarbūs šios studijų programos pakeitimai, įskaitant visų pirma
tai, kad atsisakyta modulinės struktūros. Vienas iš pagrindinių šios pertvarkos tikslų – leisti
studentams rinktis iš didesnio pasirenkamųjų dalykų bloko. Taigi magistrantūros studentams
suteikiama daugiau lankstumo stiprinant individualų studijų profilį arba, kitaip tariant, išplečiant
disciplinų prizmę. Šią reformą iki šiol tvirtai palaiko visos dalyvaujančios šalys – studentai,
dėstytojai, absolventai ir darbdaviai. Tačiau akivaizdu, kad dar kelis metus reikia atidžiai stebėti
ir vertinti jos poveikį.

Pagrindinis studijų programos *Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija* tikslas yra „rengti aukšto lygio specialistus suteikiant jiems žinių ir gebėjimų, reikalingų analizuojant užsienio politiką ir norint gerai suvokti tarptautinius santykius bei diplomatiją". Pagrindinių ir pasirenkamųjų dalykų visuma suformuota taip, kad studentai įgytų tarptautinių santykių ir diplomatijos srities žinių ir gebėjimų.

Ekspertų grupė teigiamai vertina požiūrį į studijų rezultatus, kuriuo grindžiama ši programa. Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai pagrįsti akademiniais ir profesiniais reikalavimais, visuomenės ir darbo rinkos poreikiais. Ši programa suteikia tai, ką žada, ir neatitikimų tarp numatomų studijų rezultatų, turinio ir kvalifikacijų nėra.

Studijų dalykų turinys atitinka studijų rūšį ir pakopą ir yra tinkamas numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti. Atsižvelgiant į absolventų būsimo darbo sritis, patariama įtraukti daugiau studijų dalykų anglų kalba arba į pasirenkamųjų dalykų sąrašą įtraukti užsienio kalbų dalykus.

Realų rūpestį ekspertų grupei kelia dalykų apie mokslinių tyrimų metodus atsisakymas pasirenkant fakultatyvų dalyką (*option*), kuriuo siekiama pakelti politikos mokslų bakalauro laipsnio neturinčių studentų lygį. Dėstytojai nesuvokia, kad tai problema, bet ekspertų grupė mano, kad studentams gali pritrūkti metodologinių, analitinių ir duomenų tvarkymo gebėjimų, kai pradės dirbti. Panašų susirūpinimą išreiškė darbdaviai ir kai kurie studentai bei absolventai. Šioje programoje beveik nėra plataus ir privalomo mokymo, kaip atlikti mokslinius tyrimus. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja vadovybei įtraukti daugiau su moksliniais tyrimais susijusių dalykų.

Dėstytojų kvalifikacija yra tinkama numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti. Dėstytojų sudėtis užtikrina teorines žinias, praktinę patirtį ir visas svarbiausias programos temas. Dėstytojai aktyviai dalyvauja tarptautinėse mainų programose ir skelbia daug publikacijų iš savo mokymo srities. Ekspertų grupė pažymi, kad nacionalinių publikacijų yra daugiau nei tarptautinių, be to, dėstytojų aktyvumas publikavimo srityje nevienodas. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja vadovybei toliau plėtoti 2016 m. pradžioje pagal motyvacijos skatinimo sistemą numatytas priemones, kuriomis siekiama padidinti aukšto lygio tarptautinių publikacijų skaičių. Be šių priemonių, rekomenduojama daugiau dėmesio skirti visapusiško ir ilgalaikio dėstytojų tobulinimo, apimančio nuolatinį mokymą neatsitraukiant nuo darbo, konsultavimą dėl projektų rašymo, akademinio judumo planavimą ir dalyvavimą akademiniuose tinkluose, perspektyvai. Apibendrinant reikia pasakyti, kad dabartinę sistemą, kai dėstytojų profesinis tobulėjimas grindžiamas individualiais poreikiais, reikia pakeisti koordinuota sistema, kuri būtų orientuota į organizacijos plėtros tikslus.

TSPMI auditorijos, kompiuterinė technika, programinė įranga ir medijų įranga yra tinkama ir pakankama. Biblioteka nėra didelė, bet patogi. Be to, plačiai prieinamos elektroninės mokslinės bazės, kuriomis nuolat naudojamasi studijų procese. Tai, kad Instituto pastate nėra belaidžio interneto (*Wi-Fi*), gali kažkiek trukdyti mokymuisi naudojantis internetu. Ekspertų grupė mano, kad naujos socialinių medijų priemonės (pavyzdžiui, *Facebook*) negali visiškai kompensuoti ribotos prieigos prie interneto ir nepakankamo naudojimosi internetinėmis mokymosi programomis (pvz., *Moodle*).

Grupiniam darbui skirtos infrastruktūros mažoka. Būtina didinti mažų klasių, kompiuterių laboratorijų skaičių ir grupiniam darbui skirtą plotą. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja vadovybei investuoti į priemones (įrangą) ir skaitmeninius mokymosi išteklius, ypač į grupiniam darbui skirtą infrastruktūrą ir vieno langelio principu veikiančias mokymosi platformas.

Priėmimo reikalavimai yra aiškūs. Universitetas įdiegė kokybės užtikrinimo procedūras, įskaitant studentų grįžtamąjį ryšį nuolat organizuojant apklausas. Bendroji studijų rezultatų vertinimo sistema yra aiški, tinkama ir viešai skelbiama. Kalbant apie seminarų vertinimą, pastebima, kad tarp atskirų dalykų nėra bendros sistemos skiriant užduotis ir jas vertinant. Studentai mano, kad ne visų dalykų seminarų įvertinamai yra teisingi ir suprantami. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja profesionaliai parengti vertinimo procedūras, nustatant kai kurias formalias taisykles dėl užduočių valandų paskirstymo ir užduočių vertinimo.

Socialinių partnerių noras prisidėti prie šios programos daro įspūdį. Socialiniai partneriai dalyvauja tobulinant programą, ginant baigiamuosius darbus, mažiau mokymo bei mentorystės srityje. Kad Institutas galėtų sėkmingai priimti būsimus iššūkius (pvz., didėjančią konkurenciją aukštojo mokslo srityje ir darbo rinkoje), ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja jam išeiti iš „komforto zonos", kurioje dabar studijų programa *Tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija* yra, ir rasti naujų bendradarbiavimo partnerių vietos, regiono ir tarptautinėje arenoje.
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III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutui (toliau – TSPMI arba Institutas) primygtinai rekomenduojama persvarstyti šios studijų programos dalykų apie mokslinių tyrimų metodus statusą (privalomieji ar pasirenkamieji) ir nuoseklumą. Dalykų apie metodus mokoma siekiant užtikrinti, kad visi absolventui įgytų tvirtus mokslinių tyrimų įgūdžius, atitinkančius antrosios pakopos studijas, o ne tam, kad tik būtų išlyginamos pagrindinės priimtų studentų žinios.

2. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja, kad Institutas ir Studijų programos komitetas siektų užtikrinti didesnį šios programos tarptautiškumą, pvz., daugiau dalykų dėstyti anglų kalba, o užsienio kalbas įtraukti į šią programą kaip pasirenkamuosius dalykus.

3. Institutui rekomenduojama užtikrinti strateginę ir ilgalaikę dėstytojų tobulinimo perspektyvą, t. y. mokyti akademinio rašymo anglų kalba ir paraiškų stipendijoms gauti rašymo, skatinti dėstytojus dalyvauti profesinio tobulinimo kursuose ir juos pripažinti. Be to, patariama atidžiau kontroliuoti dėstytojų dalyvavimo idėjų kalvės veikloje ir aukšto lygio akademiniuose moksliniuose tyrimuose pusiausvyrą.

4. Ekspertų grupė Institutui ir Studijų programos komitetui pataria plėsti socialinių partnerių tinklą dabartinių Instituto studentų ir absolventų darbdavių gretas papildant naujais partneriais.

5. Institutui rekomenduojama supaprastinti studentų vertinimo sistemą ir stengtis, kad vertinimo procesas taptų tikrai interaktyviu ir nuolatiniu dėstytojų bei studentų bendravimu, kuris yra šios studijų programos kokybės užtikrinimo dalis.
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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)