



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto  
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS IŠPLĖSTINĖS PRAKTIKOS SLAUGA**  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**OF ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING**  
**NEW STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Vilnius University

**Experts' team:**

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**Evaluation coordinator -**

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
Report language – English

## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Išplėstinės praktikos slauga</i>
Studijų krypčių grupė	Sveikatos mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Slauga ir akušerija (G08)
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė, 2 metai
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Sveikatos mokslų magistras, išplėstinės praktikos slaugytojas

## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Advanced Practice Nursing
Study field group	Health Sciences
Study field	Nursing and midwifery (G08)
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time, 2 years
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Health Sciences and Professional Qualification of an Advanced Practice Nurse

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of new study programmes is based on the Methodology for drafting the descriptions of proposed study programmes and for conducting external evaluation and accreditation thereof, approved by Order No 1-01-157 of 28 November 2011 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) *description of new study programme 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 for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

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

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the description of new study programme and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1	Mapping how the programme meets the European directives (In particular demonstrating the where the clinical practice hours will be achieved). All this should appear in a format of table (1 page approximately).
2	A plan of human resources development which indicates a) the additional human resource required to deliver the programmes (including any new positions which will be created) b) The qualifications and experience required in any new positions c) A plan for the development of suitably qualified nurses to deliver the programme in the longer term.
3	A plan of material resource development, with timescales demonstration the development of sufficient material resources to deliver the programme.
4	Notes and links of evaluation report of advanced practice nursing new study programme at Vilnius University; Annex 1: The mission, vision and philosophy of Nursing department of Nursing institute of health sciences the faculty of medicine, Vilnius university; Annex 2: The list of preliminary nurse teachers (MA); Annex 3: The list of books; Annex 4: A plan of material resource development, with timescales demonstration the development of sufficient material resources to deliver the programme.

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 25-26 March, 2019.

1. **Andy Gibbs (team leader),**
  2. **Polona Mivšek, academic,**
  3. **Andželika Zavackienė, academic/ social partner**
  4. **Ringailė Mikutytė, students' representative.**
- Evaluation coordinator –Eglė Ozolinčiūtė.**

## **II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

### **2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes**

The aims and learning outcomes of the programme are clearly articulated. Programme graduates will be prepared as qualified advanced practice nurses. Professional and scientific activity is based on the latest advanced practice knowledge and method creation as well as their application in clinical practice, while improving and expanding clinical and research competencies. These competencies are, innovative expert nursing practice, educational and research competency, patient and colleague advice and training, clinical leadership, cooperation, as well as strategic and systemic outlook in order to improve the quality of healthcare services. The aim (mission) of the programme is not publicly announced because the programme is not yet accredited. During the meeting with senior management and faculty administration neither could articulate to experts that the programme has vision and philosophy and couldn't explain what the background of the Advanced Practice Nursing studies at Vilnius University is.

The teaching staff demonstrated that they have engaged positively with the curriculum and they have great enthusiasm to be involved in this process. Also, it was indicated that they have full support from the senior management and faculty administration as well.

Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are linked to the Lithuania, societal and labour market needs in the higher demands. The programme is relevant and innovative, oriented to high qualified specialist in nursing practice who would be independent nurse in three fields: primary health care, anaesthesia and intensive care, emergency acute health care. Graduates of Advanced Practice Nursing Studies will be able to work independently in various health care institutions and manage in a changing, multi-professional environment, providing quality healthcare services.

During the meeting with social partners, they demonstrated great enthusiasm and confirmed that they were involved in development the programme and it was adapted to their needs as well. At this moment Vilnius Santara Clinic are ready to hire 5-6 advanced practice nurses with specialization emergency medical care, Republic Vilnius University Hospital - 5-6 advanced practice nurses with specialization emergency medical care and 5 advanced practice nurses with specialization anaesthesia and intensive care, Vilnius Seskines Polyclinic are ready to hire 4 primary health care advanced practice nurses, Vilnius Centro Polyclinic – 7 primary health care advanced practice nurses. A representative from the ministry of health indicated that the programme was in line with future development needs of the nursing profession. Social partners

mentioned that there was a strong local need for such graduates and that the lack of suitable local higher-level programmes was currently problematic and this programme would address this. Also, social partner's delegates confirmed that they guarantee a higher salary as well. Consequently, the need for such qualified nurses was demonstrated and the title of the programme, intended learning outcomes, the content of the programme and the qualification to be obtained are well-tuned.

***In summary, advantages:***

- The aims and learning outcomes of the programme are clearly articulated.
- Programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are linked to the Lithuania, societal and labour market needs
- programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are linked on academic and/or professional requirements
- programme objectives and intended learning outcomes correspond to the type and cycle of studies and the level of qualifications
- title of the programme, intended learning outcomes, the content of the programme and the qualification to be obtained are well-tuned

***Disadvantages:***

- No clear link between programme aims and faculty mission

***2.2. Curriculum design***

The program structure complies with all the requirements mentioned in legal acts. The content of subjects (modules) corresponds to the type and cycle of studies according Lithuanian Medical Norm MN 160:2017 "Nurse of Advanced Practice. Rights, Duties, Competence and Responsibilities" approved by Order V-852 of 7 July 2017 of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania.

The general amount of credits is 120 (ECTS), 3200 hours (800 hours per one semester), for direct contact 1095 hours, for independent student work 2105 hours. The program 65,78 percentage dedicated for independent student work. The students have to prepare an article for publication after final preparation of scientific work. The scope of the programme is sufficient to achieve the level required for the qualified advanced practice nurse's general and special competences whose professional and scientific activity is based on the latest advanced practice knowledge and method creation. The modules are arranged consistently in the first semester, because all subjects are taught jointly (30 ECTS) to all students, regardless of the chosen specialization. Students have the opportunity to choose one of three specializations (primary health care, anaesthesia and intensive care or emergency acute health care) at the beginning of the first semester of the first year. The nursing care, medicine, health and social science knowledge are integrated in this programme with special attention to practical skills' and competencies' education. There are obligatory and optional subjects, clinical practice in relation with specialization in the curricula. The last point of the studies is Master thesis and professional qualification exam. This programme is oriented to practical advance nursing practice and research competencies.

Study subjects and the clinical trainings are spread evenly throughout the programme. Practices follow theoretical courses which create the favourable condition for students to integrate theory

and practice. Subjects overlap is consciously analysed to make it rational and support students' competence achievement.

Applied teaching forms were discussed during the meetings - the innovations and active methods have been used during study process. The methods of information transferring such as lectures, seminars, discussions, demonstrations, interviews, conversations, illustrations, consulting, practical operational methods for encouraging the critical thinking such as twin-work, practical training, data collection, simulations, the problem-based learning methods by analysing situations and cases would be used.

At the meeting with teaching staff they confirmed that Advanced Practice Nursing subjects are taught exclusively by teachers who are nurses and practical training is being supervised by nurses trained as mentors. Except theoretical and practical skills which required special attention, deeper skills and knowledge which able to do only doctors, for example patient's endotracheal intubation and extubating. This requirement needs to expand theoretical knowledge and deepen practical skills and clinical competencies in all specialization. To understand deeper these knowledge reequipments that lecture will be a medical doctor. These modules include theoretical and practical skills, students will learn from the physicians (doctors). During the meeting with staff responsible for the preparation of the description of new study programme of Advanced Practice Nursing (MA) was confirmed by the programme manager and teaching staff.

Also, students will have the opportunity to improve their knowledge, practical skills and clinical situations without harming the patient at the Laboratory of Simulation and Nursing Interventions and Nursing Techniques was established in the clinics of VU Hospital Santara Clinics. During visiting the Laboratory of Simulation VU Hospital Santara Clinics the child and mother simulation theatre was well equipped. The emergency and trauma centre of simulation looks like it has not been used for some time and there was concern from the panel about the possibilities for nursing students to have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and practical skills in this simulation centre, however teaching staff subsequently provided assurances that the centre is in use every day. Furthermore, during the meeting at simulation centre, doctor anaesthesiologist said that in simulation's have opportunity develop practical skills the physicians and the physician's students and if it needs will be able nurse's students as well, however this was later explained as a miscommunication and that nurse will have access.

***In summary, advantages:***

- the program structure complies with all the requirements mentioned in legal acts.
- the content of subjects (modules) corresponds to the type and cycle of studies
- the programme is oriented to practical advance nursing practice and research competencies
- the structure of the programme supports students' competence achievement

***Disadvantages:***

- the content of the programme is medically orientated and does not correspond to the latest academic, artistic or technological achievements

***2.3. Teaching staff***

The qualifications of the staff meet legal requirements as indicated in the report, p.39, Table 7. The qualifications of the staff are adequate for meeting learning outcomes. The outcomes of the

study are based on nursing profession, however in the list of teachers, there are few staff with nursing education (5 as reported in Annex 5), although this was later said to be an error and there are actually more staff with nursing qualifications.

The number of staff is adequate, there is enough staff in general, however there is a lack of suitably qualified nurses. Currently, there is just one professor of nursing employed. The management team reported low numbers of PhD nurses in the country. Additionally, they also do not have advanced practice nurse in the clinical setting to be a mentor to the students. Therefore, in the process of the transition of clinical competencies from nurses to doctors the management team suggest that they need physicians in the programme. In the longer term they state an intention to replace physicians with them with future graduates of this proposed program – although there is both no clear plan of how this will be achieved nor acknowledgement that nursing is a profession with its own skills and knowledge, not merely an occupation which exists to lighten the workload of doctors.

In terms of teaching staff turnover, because of the lack of the nursing staff, there is a risk that there will be inadequate resources should a key member of qualified nursing personnel leaves the university. The programme involves staff from other faculties of nursing; however, the university should develop its own base of adequate nursing teachers.

With regard to enabling teaching staff professional development, the teachers produce a lot of publications (Annex 4). This was stated by teachers to be related to university rules for renewing the teacher's title every 5 years and criteria for academic advancement. The panel noted the significant publication efforts of the teachers and noted that the university commitment only provides standards for continuing employment. In general, support from the university is limited and what limited resource there is, is not evenly distributed, for example in a meeting of ten teachers only one had benefited from university funding and had attended five international conferences in the past year, whilst the remaining nine teachers had had no support at all. Furthermore, staff development is not linked to performance and career development. The Faculty does not do enough to promote professional development. In order to build strong foundation of nursing profession, they should have a strong plan how to attract and keep nursing PhD students.

Teaching staff involvement in the research at the field of nursing They do have nursing research projects and they also do research on other fields, relevant for nursing profession (page 38, Table 9).

The staff meets legal requirements, but the panel suggest implementing the structure during the next four study years in favour of the profession that this study program is developed for. There should be more nurses educating nursing students. With the current structure of staff it would be difficult to meet the outcomes of the program as set in the proposal. It is also not sufficient to address the issue of staff turnover. We would like to see a developed resource plan for nursing staff that will be realised in the next four years. The existing staff is currently involved in teaching at other programs, their workload will be even higher when the nursing programs start, therefore the management needs to consider employment of nursing teachers before the realisation of the study activity. They encourage the nurses to study PhD at the University of Turku. We suggest stimulating the PhD students with the scholarships in order to finish the PhD study and stay/return to work at the faculty.

The second issue is professional development of the staff. They do have on a university level, criteria for renewal of the teachers' titles and necessary preconditions to achieve academic titles, however just having standards does not predispose help from the management. Faculty does not



do enough to promote professional development. At the visit it was told that faculty enables visits at the conferences abroad and financial stimulates publishing in journals with high impact factor, however this was not confirmed this to be the rule when discussing professional development strategies with teachers. We suggest the management to build more precise individual plans for professional development of nurses who will be teaching at the proposed study program, with exact strategies to promote their professional development (bursaries for publications in IF journals, possibilities for supporting active participation on international scientific conferences, scholarships etc.).

***In summary, advantages:***

- adequate qualifications of the staff in general and the number of staff is overall adequate
- there is teaching staff involvement in the research at the field of nursing
- university rules for renewing the teacher 's title and criteria for academic advancement

***Disadvantages:***

- outcomes of the study are based on nursing profession and in the list of teachers, there are few staff with nursing education
- faculty does not promote nursing professional development
- staff workload is unclear and specific provision to free up time for contribution to the programme was not evident

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

In the library at the school there is only few books from the field of nursing. Some of them in the labs are old and should be moved away – otherwise students might think that they are suggested by the teachers. Central library is also far from faculty. At the time of the visit, all libraries, located in the city centre were sending books to that central library. At the moment of visit of the central library, the nursing books were transferred from centre of the city, therefore we were not able to see them, but we were provided with a list of them. Those which are ordered were on the separate list, however they have ordered just one of each, presumably for teachers only, in any case an inadequate number for the student body.

The faculty library is poorly stocked with nursing books. Some books at the faculty labs are 40 years old. The list of books provided consists of some good resources, but there is only 1 copy of each ordered. Central library is very far, but it offers nursing books and students have the possibility to use computers. We were told at the visit that students can use databases from home to assess periodicals. They have mainly medical databases but do report using also CINAHL and ERIC. Computers were only offered in central library, suggesting that it is a necessity for students to have own computers. Following the site visit the programme team assured the panel that there were computers available to students and there had not been time to show these to the panel during the five hour tour of facilities.

There are adequate premises for studies both quality and quantity. They have enough lecture rooms different sizes (Annex 3). In terms of adequate teaching and learning equipment (computers, laboratories), laboratories at the faculty are poorly equipped. Simulation rooms are currently in different locations, some in the school, some at the hospitals. In 2022 there will be a new simulation lab. Labs at the faculty are poorly equipped. Manikins are old and tired. Midwifery and neonatology at the clinic are well equipped, other fields averagely. In hospitals

which the team visited there were simulation labs that are well equipped, especially the obstetrics department. The simulators at the clinics are better, especially for the field of neonatology and midwifery. There is no computer room at the faculty or a room where students could study. The review team asked for the development plan for learning facilities, with dates and budget. A paper with these headings was provided but indicated neither budget nor timescales.

The review team considered whether there were adequate arrangements for clinical practice. The SER reported that they have guaranteed clinical placements (p. 40) Also social partners confirmed their will to be involved in the education of the future students. However, any adjustment to either the numbers of students or hours of clinical placements for students would require a review of the adequacy of placements. Clinical settings are far from school.

It is recommended to provide more nursing books for students in the faculty library. There should be more copies of relevant new books available for students at site (in laboratories). Students would also benefit of a place where they could study, equipped with computers. The collection of simulators at the faculty be renewed and hopefully with the simulation centre in the 2022 the possibilities for simulations will be improved.

***In summary, advantages:***

- there are adequate premises for studies both quality and quantity
- central library is modern and students have the opportunity to use computers
- social partners confirmed their will to be involved in the education of the future students.
- students can use databases from home

***Disadvantages:***

- the faculty library is poorly stocked with nursing books.
- laboratories at the faculty are poorly equipped
- copies of relevant new books available for students at site

## ***2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment***

According to the documents, admission requirements are well founded and visible to students. It's organised and implemented by (LAMA BPO) <http://www.lamabpo.lt/>

The Advanced Practice Nursing study programme will accept candidates who have completed the first cycle Nursing studies at a university or those who have complete the Nursing studies at a college and attended an additional course at a university. The formula of the entrance score is the following:  $(10 + A) + 4(10 + E) + M$ , where A is the average of all marks in a higher university science diploma supplement, E is the mark(average) of the final work and / or final examination main nursing studies, M is the total mark received by adding 1 point for every publication at a scientific fellowship and 2 point for a published article in a science media.

Students will be provided with variety of possibilities to compete in foreign universities. The biggest number of students goes abroad via Erasmus study exchange programme. Student mobility is encouraged by informing them about a possibility to study abroad on the VU website, other programmes were suggested as well. Regarding exchange programmes main thing is to

specify what exactly it takes for student to successfully be accepted to particular programme, as no information on that was provided.

The Study communication and information unit at Vilnius University provides both individual and group consultations, organises seminars and presentations, provides information via phone and e-mail as well as information publications and the Internet. At the Faculty of Medicine, social support is provided by the Dean's office in collaboration with the Student Representation of the Faculty of Medicine. Student scholarship and support provision procedures are determined by the documents approved by the VU Senate. Students may receive social scholarships, which are administrated by the State Study Fund. <http://vsf.lrv.lt/> According to the decision of VU scholarship grant committee, there may be scholarships provided for academic excellence, the fund of which consists of the assignments of the national budget and the national budget for studies for student academic excellence used to provide state funded student positions as well as study fees. Scholarships for academic excellence are granted to the best students. In addition, once in a semester there may be granted a one-time scholarship for student academic excellence. Learning and teaching methods were discussed. Applied informational methods, practical methods, problem solving situations, group and team work methods, as well as research methods and self-evaluation. Also, assessment system of performance is publicly available, as we talked to teaching staff no exceptional examples of assessment were given so the system is not adequate and should be reviewed by the given criteria. As discussed with members of this programme, all graduates from the Master in Nursing programme continue practical nursing work and go into administrative positions in nursing. (Examples were given from Klaipeda University and LSMU) However, it was pointed clear that Masters are very needed as teachers to be, and made it clear that programme is very important to finally start teaching students to become qualified in advanced practise nursing. Social, cultural and demographic situation facts were mentioned as well.

***In summary, advantages:***

- entrance requirements are well-founded, consistent and transparent
- organisation of the study process ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- students are encouraged to take part in scientific, artistic or applied science activities;
- students are provided conditions to take part in mobility programmes
- the higher education institution ensures proper academic and social support
- professional activities of the majority of programme graduates correspond to the expectations of programme operators and employers
- the programme corresponds to the state economic, social and cultural and future development needs
- fair learning environment is ensured

***Disadvantages:***

- the system of assessing student achievements needs elaboration
- eligibility criteria for mobility experience is not developed

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

The description of programme management in the SER is substantially the generic Vilnius University regulations, implemented as part of the internal quality assurance system with two additional paragraphs expressing a desire to involve stakeholders. This is understandable to a large extent as the programme is not yet operational. In discussion, during various meetings it is evident that the VU IQA system is robust enough to collect appropriate, relevant data and information. A programme committee is appointed and the responsibilities within that are clear. There is a plan to involve stakeholders in delivery, assessment and membership of relevant programme committees. There is also a plan to involve students in international projects. For each of these topics a formal plan does not exist and these should be created. In terms of international projects, this would be welcomed as the level of internationalisation in the programme is negligible, which given the need to develop the discipline, is essential for both staff and students, possibly benchmarking against other EU nursing programmes.

There is no mention in the SER, and no elaboration could be given in meetings, as to how the programme will monitor and ensure that students will meet the requirements of EU regulations in terms of both the numbers of hours a student will achieve in theory and practice and also in which specific sub sets of practice.

The programme document contained numerous easily correctable errors and the programme team responded to every recommendation at the factual check stage of this report. This indicates a weak internal quality assurance system, which fails to detect errors and omissions and addresses issues without deliberation or due process.

Currently there is no information publicly available as the programme is not yet accredited.

### ***In summary, advantages:***

- responsibilities clearly identified
- robust university IQA systems

### ***Disadvantages:***

- plans to involve stakeholders need to be consolidated
- internationalisation of the programme will support planned mobility activity
- weak programme IQA

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Programme aims and learning outcomes**

- Develop a vision for the development of a nursing discipline within the faculty, endorsed by faculty
- Develop an underpinning philosophy and approach to nursing, endorsed at faculty level, which would underpin educational approaches and provide a clear nursing focus

#### **Teaching Staff**

- Develop more precise individual plans for professional development of nurses who will be teaching at the proposed study program, with exact strategies to promote their professional development
- Stimulating the PhD students with the scholarships in order to finish the PhD study and stay/return to work at the faculty

#### **Facilities and learning resources**

- Provide more nursing books for students in the faculty library. There should be more copies of relevant new books available for students at site (in laboratories).
- Students would also benefit of a place where they could study, equipped with computers
- The collection of simulators at the faculty be renewed and expanded within a three-year period. Currently they are just about adequate.

#### **Study process and students' performance assessment**

- Elaborate assessment protocols
- Develop criteria for eligibility for mobility

#### **Programme management**

- Consolidate plans to involve stakeholders
- Internationalise the programme

#### IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Advanced Practice Nursing* 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	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	2
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	3
6.	Programme management	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>

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

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

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

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

Grupės vadovas: Andy Gibbs

Team leader:

Grupės nariai: Polona Mivšek

Team members: Andželika Zavackienė

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