



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto

***PSICHOLOGIJOS IR KRIMINOLOGIJOS PROGRAMOS
(62606S101, 621S10002)***

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *PSYCHOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY* (62606S101,
621S10002)**

STUDY PROGRAMME

at Vilnius University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Psichologija ir kriminologija</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	62606S101, 621S10002
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Psichologija
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	psichologijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1999-04-23

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Psychology and Criminology</i>
State codes	62606S101, 621S10002
Study area	social sciences
Study field	Psychology
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Cycle of studies	Second
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (2)
Scope of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Psychology
Date of registration of the study programme	1999/04/23

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I. INTRODUCTION

As stated in the self-evaluation report, the masters degree programme in Psychology and Criminology was launched in 1999, but in 2001 the implementation of the programme was suspended as a) the study programme did not comply with certain formal requirements defined in respect of study programmes; b) the psychology courses were only loosely related to the criminology subjects delivered; and c) students were not fully satisfied with the contents of the study programme, the quality of teaching of individual subjects, or the practical experience they obtained. The programme was re-opened in 2008 as a part of the Project "Interdisciplinary extensive Master's degree studies in criminology at Vilnius University", funded by EU Structural Funds. The primary objective of the project was to "improve professional abilities in criminology research, provide to students of the course modern education in criminology according to the 2nd cycle higher education requirements, train specialists meeting market needs, also enhance the abilities of doctoral students (as future teachers and researchers) in acquiring knowledge of international level required for a modern democratic society". In the self-evaluation it is stated that the master's degree study programme in Psychology and Criminology is the "only interdisciplinary psychology-linked programme complementing studies in psychology by criminology aspects in law and sociology". There was insufficient analysis of the state of the labour market and the current need for such specialization in the self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report explains the reasons for expanding the previous curriculum during the project implementation in order to meet the project aims and objectives, which led to a number of new subjects being introduced into the curriculum.

This evaluation report has been produced in the following way: the expert group received the self-evaluation report in June 2011. All members of the expert group individually read the self-evaluation report and prepared draft reports. The site visit was carried out in conjunction with the evaluation of four other programmes in psychology for which separate reports have been prepared. During the visit the team had the opportunity to discuss the programmes with faculty administrators, teaching staff, students and employers. They also visited the library, offices, teaching space and laboratories associated with the programme. After the visit the expert group held a meeting in which the contents of the evaluation were discussed to ensure that the present report represents the opinion of the whole group.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The primary objective of the programme is to develop "*graduates' general and specialized competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) related to the field including forensic psychology and criminology knowledge, research skills and research application, critical thinking and problem solving, consulting, ethics, communication and working skills in the team of interdisciplinary specialists*".

However, the scope of the programme may be too narrow to ensure that all these learning outcomes are achieved. Despite the fact that the programme is called "Psychology and Criminology", only one subject from the obligatory subjects could be related directly to criminology, i.e., "Theoretical criminology". Instead, courses in sociology and law are introduced, and therefore the programme's title may not fully reflect the contents of the programme and may mislead potential students. In fact, a more adequate name for the programme could be Legal or Forensic Psychology, since the criminology part is not really covered. Moreover, when describing the programme's aims, the report states that "*The*

programme has been developed for students holding a bachelor's degree and seeking to apply their knowledge in psychology in the area of crime investigation, forensic psychological expert examination, developing and implementing different programmes on crime and asocial behaviour prevention, also organising re-socialisation of criminals, consulting victims and other participants of the process, training law enforcement officers, etc.”. Thus the aims of the programme are mostly related to legal and forensic psychology, rather than to criminology.

Furthermore, the objectives of the programme are not fully related to the objectives and learning outcomes of specific courses. The self-evaluation report does not make clear which subjects are supposed to help to achieve specific learning outcomes. For example, it is not clear, which learning outcomes could be reached in the courses on Human Neuropsychology and Problems of Social corruption, and others, nor how one of the programme's objectives and learning outcomes, to “demonstrate an understanding of appropriate research methods and statistical procedures” could be reached without an obligatory course on research methodology and statistics.

The quality of the learning outcomes at course unit level is sometimes questionable in that it is not clear what knowledge students would be expected to demonstrate after completion of the course. There is great variety between the different courses, and in some cases learning outcomes are just descriptions of the course. Learning outcomes on course level need to be more clearly specified in order to make them possible to assess and to promote active learning and the gaining of competences.

The connections of the programme's objectives with the development projections of the country and region are explained on the basis of EU documents and regulations and Lithuanian Government regulations. These documents are rather out-dated, as programmes and priorities mentioned covered the priorities of the 2004-2007 or 2004-2008 periods. No analysis is given about the potential need in the labour market for specialists with qualifications in this specific masters programme. The updated masters degree programme in psychology and criminology was opened to admit students starting from 2008/2009 academic year, and it would have been helpful to have had more recent justification in terms of current EU or Lithuanian needs or priorities.

To summarize, the name of the programme, its content and learning outcomes are not fully compatible with each other (see also comments under Curriculum Design). The learning outcomes mainly address issues of forensic psychology, with issues relevant to criminology given much less emphasis. The programme seems to be multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. The programme aims and learning outcomes need better justification with respect to the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market.

2. Curriculum design

The curriculum design seems to comply with Lithuania's requirements for masters study programmes. However, the interdisciplinary character of the programme is not reflected in the study subjects included into the programme, since it is dominated by subjects in psychology. Thus, the programme is not well balanced between psychology and criminology, as 63.6% of the subjects covered relate to psychology, 24.2% to law, and 12.1% to sociology and criminology. The same disproportion applies to elective courses.

As students accepted for the MA program are obliged to have a bachelors degree in psychology, they presumably lack knowledge in criminology; however, the programme design does not meet

their needs to acquire sufficient knowledge in criminology. Practical skills in criminology are not trained either, as far as the team of experts could judge from the subjects included. Only Theoretical Criminology is included (4 credits) as an obligatory course, and only Criminology (3 credits) as an optional course.

Overall, there appear to be biases in offenders' age coverage, as many courses focus on juvenile crime, for example psychology of asocial behaviour, and juvenile sexual offending.

The majority of the obligatory courses in psychology are adequate, though the content of the courses in some cases could be improved. The team would have liked to see more coverage of the assessment procedures related to forensic evaluation or the criminal process. This might include training in specific risk assessment instruments, such as PCL-R or PCL-SV, or OASys, or HCR-20, or other techniques, more directly related to (forensic) psychology and criminology, and available (and even standardized) in Lithuania.

The team was uncertain about the rationale behind the elective courses. It was not always clear what kind of specialization students could develop and what research aims or outcomes will be achieved from the subjects offered. The number of elective courses in the first semester is 8, and five in the second semester. Given that the number of students is low (about 10-12 students per semester), many of the optional courses do not take place, meaning that students' expectations are not met.

It is not clear why the course on Advanced Methods of Psychological Research and Statistics is placed in an elective course list rather than being compulsory, since one of the learning outcomes in the self-evaluation report is that students will learn "appropriate research methods and statistical procedures". After inspection of the MA theses, the team concluded that the masters programme in Psychology and Criminology had not developed students' skills in this area much beyond undergraduate level.

The aims of the modules in human neuropsychology, psychotraumatology, and addiction are general and it is not clear how these courses will contribute to building the competencies of MA students in psychology and criminology. They could, however, be made more relevant to this programme if the content was geared more specifically towards the needs of these students.

Some courses use literature only in Lithuanian, and in some cases are rather outdated. For example, in "Victimology" and "Criminology" many recent books in English are missing.

The teaching methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

To summarize, the curriculum design meets legal requirements. However, the content of the subjects is in some instances very general and not completely consistent with the type and level of the studies, nor is it always clear how some of the courses address the intended learning outcomes. The teaching methods are appropriate but the literature recommended to students is in some cases a little dated. The rationale underlying the choice of obligatory and optional courses needs clarification.

3. Staff

The staff teaching the programme meet legal requirements. All of them hold at least a PhD. There are 4 professors, 14 associate professors (7 of whom are from other departments or institutions) and one lecturer. Staff enhance their professional qualifications in accordance with

the regulations on this at the Vilnius University. They go on visits to other universities, attend conferences and courses, and are members of editorial boards. In general they seem very active and engaged in their scientific and professional practice. The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes.

The research projects, conferences and other activities carried out by staff teaching the programme are numerous, though the information given in Appendix 5 does not indicate which are directly related to forensic psychology and criminology.

As far as the team could see at the site visit the department did not seem to have engaged much in supporting their teachers in the substantial current changes in higher education within the intergovernmental initiative of the Bologna process. Some optional seminars had been held but as far as the team understood these were mostly to do with the structural parts of the Bologna Process focusing on the ECTS credits. Teachers did not seem to be fully aware of the demands resulting from a shift from teacher driven provision to student centred learning. This needs to be developed in this (and other) programmes. The teachers, however, seem both interested and well aware of the need for using and developing a variety of teaching methods.

In sum, the staff situation is fully satisfactory for the programme needs and meets legal requirements. The qualifications and number of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes and staff turnover is at a satisfactory level. Some of the teaching staff are involved in research directly related to the study programme but for others their research interests are in different areas. Since most publications are in Lithuanian, the research publications may not be known at an international level. The University needs to ensure that the teaching staff are aware of developments in terms of teaching and learning at the European level.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Facilities and learning resources are adequate. Access to data bases, journals and books is on par with institutions in other parts of Europe and the U.S. and students have the resources they need for a positive learning experience. Although there is limited office and classroom space, the organisation of work places and the good availability of internet access allow the programme to function well. While there are good quality laboratories for psychophysiology, psychophysics and social observation, facilities for other types of psychological practical work are limited, but this does not seem to have created problems for students on this programme. The library is in an elegant building and contains high quality reading rooms. There are textbooks and journal articles in Lithuanian, English, German and Russian, though the quantity of these is somewhat lower than in many other countries. However, this is compensated by the excellent availability of electronic resources including Psycinfo, Web of Science, and many more.

5. Study process and student assessment

The admission requirements include entrance examinations in personality psychology, social psychology and clinical psychology. However, the team of experts understood that these examinations apply mainly to students coming from other universities, and wondered whether that might be perceived as discrimination against certain groups of incoming students. The rationale for these entrance examinations was not clearly explained. Only holders of a Bachelors degree in psychology are admitted to the programme, and the team wondered whether the entrance examination could be replaced by the mean of the marks in the subjects studied by the applicant.

The organization of the study process seems to ensure that the programme runs smoothly. Students are encouraged to participate in research and applied research activities. From the information provided, it seems that students have limited opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes, such as Erasmus exchanges. Students reported on difficulties they faced after Erasmus exchange visits, and about problems in finding places for internships abroad.

Students have the possibility to consult with teaching staff, and for this they can use direct meetings or virtual communication tools. Staff provide contact hours for students, but given that these apply to all programmes the team thought that these might be too short.

The requirements and assessment system vary from one subject to another. For some subjects, attendance at lectures or seminars is obligatory, for others it seems optional.

To summarize, the admission criteria may be unfair to some incoming students. Assessment criteria vary between the subjects. The teaching activities are fairly traditional, consisting mainly of lectures and seminars, but a range of interactive methods are also used. The department has also produced a number of readers, guidelines etc to the students to facilitate their studies.

6. Programme management

The overall programme management and distribution of responsibilities seems to be adequate. There are three bodies responsible for managing the programme: the Faculty of Philosophy (admissions and resources), the Department of General Psychology (teaching and staffing) and Programme Committee (quality of programme and legal issues), and each of them seemed fully aware of their roles and confusions had not arisen. Programme management is performed by the Committee of the Study Programme of psychology and criminology. The Chairman of the Committee coordinates the work of the Committee and organizes the discussion and approval of the implementation and changes to the programme. It is stated in the self-evaluation that students are asked to evaluate the course and are consulted on any changes to it. During the visit students indicated that they seldom received feedback on their comments.

The responsibility for the implementation of and the oversight of the masters programme in psychology and criminology lies with the Department of General Psychology and with the Methodological Council of the Centre on Criminology Studies of Vilnius University (which is in charge of the coordination of the programmes on psychology and criminology, sociology and criminology, and the criminology branch of law studies). Ultimately all decisions relating to the implementation, supervision and improvement of the programme are approved by the Academic Commission and the Council of the Faculty of Philosophy. The responsibility for the study process within the Faculty is taken by the Vice-Dean for Studies, who supplies the Study Programme Committee with factual information regarding the study process and legal and other normative information regarding the changes in administration of the programme and proposals with regard to emerging possibilities.

However, since students receive a masters qualification in professional psychology, we would recommend more responsibility for the Department of General Psychology. This Department's expertise is important in taking decisions about the programme aims and objectives and curriculum development and in deciding on the title of the study programme to ensure that it reflects the content of the programme.

During the visit it became clear that students provide feedback on their courses, but this is not always related to the specific study programme. Students also are not given information on the

impact of their feedback and the consequences of their evaluations are often felt only by the next year's students. Without feedback students may feel discouraged from completing the questionnaires.

Some students enrolled in the MA expressed their dissatisfaction that they were not able to attend optional courses that were advertised at the time they decided to join the programme. They also pointed out that they were unhappy with the timetable, with some days full of lectures and some almost free (with perhaps just one lecture). This made it difficult to combine study with part-time jobs, and this differed from what they expected

Most of the graduates met by the team were students enrolled in PhD studies at Vilnius University and thus the team had limited information on the opinions of graduates about the quality of studies and competences acquired for the practical work.

In sum, responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of programme implementation are fairly well designated but the programme might achieve its outcomes better if it were under the control of the Department of General Psychology. Data is available for ongoing programme improvement, and this process does involve stakeholders, although there is some room for improvement.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The title of the study programme could be changed to give more recognition to students and to better reflect the content of the study programme.
2. More responsibility should be given to the Department of General Psychology, especially in taking decisions about the programme aims and objectives, curriculum development and in deciding on the title of the study programme to ensure that it reflects the content of the programme.
3. A better balance between subjects in psychology and criminology is needed if the course retains its current title.
4. All course outlines need to be reviewed with regards to learning outcomes with a new template clearly describing aims, objectives and learning outcomes.
5. The list of elective courses should be reviewed to ensure they fulfil the programme aims, learning objectives and outcomes.
6. Review the admission requirements to ensure that equal rules are applied for incoming students. If examination is needed, it is advised to apply the entrance examination for all students who applied for the MA programme.
7. More recent literature should be recommended for students in order assure up-to-date knowledge.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Psychology and Criminology (state codes – 62606S101, 621S10002) is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	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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