



Final Programme Evaluation

Protection of the Rights of the Child

(II cycle master degree)

at

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU)

Assessment report

15 July 2014

Assessment report of the II cycle master degree programme Protection of the Rights of the Child. The final programme evaluation was carried out by **evalag** as part of the external evaluation of II cycle master degree programmes "Education of Entrepreneurship", "Educology of Law" and "Protection of the Rights of the Child".

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Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) commissioned **evalag** with the final programme evaluation of the II cycle master degree programme Protection of the Rights of the Child. The programme evaluation was carried out by an international expert team that assessed the programme according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and legal act of the Republic of Lithuania “Description of the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes” with the objective of accrediting and registering the programme according to Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and awarding **evalag**’s international quality label for programmes.

1. Mykolas Romeris University (MRU)

The Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) in its present form was established by the resolution of the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania in 1997, although it began its activities in 1990 after Lithuania’s declaration of independence. It is located in Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, with one faculty located in Kaunas, 100 km away from Vilnius. MRU is a public Lithuanian university higher education institution that offers bachelor degrees (I cycle) and master degrees (II cycle), which are directed towards professional and academic activity, as well as postgraduate degrees (PhD).

According to Lithuanian law, university level higher education institutions (universitetas) offer full-time and part-time bachelor and master degrees that allow graduates to pursue a professional or academic career. MRU is entitled to award PhD degrees (III cycle) in certain fields.

MRU has almost 18,000 students and offers 110 programmes in the study fields of Law, Public Administration, Political Science, Territorial Planning, Human Resource Management, Economics, Business Studies, Business and Administrative Studies, Finance, Accounting, Management Studies, Psychology, Social Work, Social Policy, Sociology, Communication, Education, Education Studies, Teacher training, Translation Studies, Philology, History, Philosophy, Informatics and Public Security in the following five faculties:

- Faculty of Economics and Finance Management
- Faculty of Politics and Management
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Social Technologies
- Faculty of Public Security

The following institutes and school belong to the Faculty of Social Technologies:

- Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work
- Institute of Communication and Mediation
- Institute of Psychology
- Institute of Digital Technologies
- Business and Media School

The Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work offers its students the following 15 programmes:

Bachelor's degree programmes	Master's degree programmes	Doctoral (PhD) programmes	Non-degree awarding programmes
Pedagogy of Career Education	Educology of Law	Educology	Teacher training
Social pedagogy	Education of Entrepreneurship		
Sociocultural education	Management of Education Technology		
Sociology	Health Education		
Social Work*	Protection of the Rights of the Child		
	Social Work*		
	Welfare Sociology*		
	Comparative Social Policy and Welfare*		

Table 1: Programmes of the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work

* Programmes are offered in Lithuanian and English

Responding to the need of the society, labour market and the feedback from employers, the programmes of the MRU are due to the self-evaluation report continuously developed and updated. The contents of the programmes are regularly adjusted in order to broaden the competences of the graduates and to provide young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to build a successful career.

2. Protection of the Rights of the Child programme

The Protection of the Rights of the Child master degree programme has been registered since 6 March 2006 (No. ISAK-410) and was approved on 17 August 2009 by order Nr. 1-73 and was accredited by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education until 31 December 2014.

The Protection of the Rights of the Child programme is – according to the self-evaluation report – application-oriented and focuses on practical activity of child rights protection. The programme offers students a practice-oriented education, which is closely targeted to the needs of the Lithuanian labour market.

The graduates of the programme are educated to implement and develop innovative strategies of the protection of children's rights and the ones related to the securing of child welfare in different state, non-governmental and private structures that carry out implementation and protection of the children's rights in the national and European context.

The Protection of the Rights of the Child programme is the only of such type in the field of child rights protection in Lithuania.

The MRU offers the programme in one and a half years full-time and two years part-time.

3. Accreditation process

The final programme evaluation was carried out with a peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by the MRU (according to the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes and **evalag**'s criteria catalogue), a site visit of an expert team, an assessment report by the experts and the accreditation decision by **evalag**'s accreditation commission.

The final programme evaluation (the performance principles, steps, processes, and procedures of the evaluation) was conducted in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005) and documents regulating the evaluation of programmes in the Republic of Lithuania (Procedure of the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes, approved by the Order No ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 (revision of Order No V-1487 of 29 July 2011) of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes, approved by the Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education etc.).

The expert team formed by **evalag** consisted of three professorial experts and one student expert:

- Prof. Dr. Dr. Ingrid Schütz-Müller, University of Vienna, Department of Political Science
- Prof. Dr. Helmut Wittenzellner, Stuttgart Media University, Print-Media-Management
- Prof. Dr. Rolf Jox, Catholic University of Applied Sciences of North Rhine-Westphalia, Loc. Cologne Department of Social Work
- Nils Raulf, TU Dortmund University

The site visit took place on 2 to 4 April 2014 at MRU. During the site visit the expert team met with the MRU administration, representatives of the programme, students, teaching staff, graduates and employers and visited the library and seminar rooms used by the students of the programme.

The expert team produced an assessment report of the programme with an accreditation recommendation which was submitted to **evalag**'s accreditation commission that took the final accreditation decision on 7 July 2014.

From **evalag**'s side, the evaluation was coordinated by Sabine Berganski.

4. Programme assessment

4.1 Learning outcomes

Current situation

The self-evaluation report describes programme aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme and links them to the curriculum. The intended learning outcomes

describe professional knowledge and competences as well as general and soft skills. The descriptions of the course units comprise the intended learning outcomes and contents of each study subject and give detailed information on the content, teaching and learning methods and assessment criteria and methods.

The goal of the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme “is to prepare highly qualified masters of social work in children’s rights that are able to implement and develop innovative strategies of the protection of children’s rights and the ones related to the securing of child welfare in different state, non-governmental and private structures that carry out implementation and protection of the children’s rights in the national and European context” (self-evaluation report, page 3).

According to the self-evaluation report (page 4-5), the intended learning outcomes of the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme are:

- Ability to communicate and cooperate with different audiences when submitting substantiated findings, based on the principles of respect for human rights and ethics of multicultural society.
- Ability to coordinate assistance to children and their environment (family, school etc.) based on principles of communication and cooperation, characteristic to culture and democracy.
- Ability to select research strategies and methods when analysing and dealing with rights of children protection issues.
- Ability to use research findings and guidelines in order to apply innovations and improve quality of services in a field of children rights protection.
- Ability to recognise and organise the needs of personal and professional development, based on latest professional expertise, guidelines and innovations.
- Ability to monitor and assess regularly one’s personal and professional development and to anticipate development and career perspectives.
- Ability to identify, analyse and assess the needs of children, factors affecting reasons and issues, and to deal with issues by organising and providing assistance to children and their environment, based on principle of personal responsibility for decisions taken.
- Ability to analyse and assess the validity of delivery of solutions, related to protection of rights of children, and assistance provided, in line with conditions and efficiency of welfare of children.
- Application of both national and international mechanisms (methods and procedures) of enforcement of rights of children and welfare protection.
- Ability to apply legislation and principal protection of rights of children when providing most appropriate assistance, support and protection of children, and to represent and protect best interests of children in families, institutions and court.
- Ability to provide services to children and families, while systematically assessing quality of the same services.
- Ability to develop new types of social support for children and their families, with reference to ever changing internal and external factors.

According to the self-evaluation report (page 3-4), the social work specialists in the field of child rights protection should be able:

- to plan and implement scientific research independently and apply it in the practical activity of a social worker when forming and implementing adequate social policy tools to secure children's rights and welfare;
- to analyse the opportunities and perspectives to implement children's rights and interests, that conform to the conditions and prerequisites of children's welfare, at political analytical level;
- to implement and protect children's rights and their best interests;
- to reasonably select and apply and analyse the newest knowledge and methods that help secure children's welfare, assess and develop social services in the area of the protection of children's rights;
- to create humane and democratic environments of social work that are based on mutual assistance and cooperation when assembling the team of specialists and other interested persons to implement children's rights;
- to design personal and professional development and career paths on the basis of the newest professional knowledge, innovations and recommendations.

The aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme are based on academic and professional requirements, public needs and needs of the Lithuanian labour market. The name of the programme (Protection of the Rights of the Child), its intended learning outcomes, content and qualification are compatible with each other. Furthermore, the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme are consistent with the type and level of studies and the offered qualification level. Information about the programme is publicly accessible on the university's website.

Graduates are able to pursue a professional career as social worker specialists in the field of child rights protection. The main institutions, where the graduates find a job after completing the programme, are nursing homes, social assistance (service) centres, psychological services, help centres, healthcare centres, boarding schools, police, municipality, universities and other education and training institutions, non-governmental organisations (associations, parties, trade unions, support funds etc.), various joint-stock companies and other public sector institutions.

The interests of employers and social partners are taken into account during the regular update of the programme. In the further development of the programme, the faculty cooperates with employers formally (e. g. social partners are included into the Commission for the Defence of Master's Thesis) and informally through contacts between teachers and employers.

Graduates are mostly absorbed by the local and regional job market. Depending on the economic situation, the highly qualified graduates do not have any problems finding a job in their professional area. The employability of the graduates of the programme is encouraging: almost all, who have completed their studies, were employed; e. g. in 2011 18 students out of 20, that completed studies, found a job; in 2012 20 graduates out of 23 found a job and in 2013 33 graduates out of 40 found a job their professional field (self-evaluation report, page 26).

Assessment

According to the expert team, the intended learning outcomes describe well the contents and qualifications offered by the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme. The programme aims and learning outcomes are clearly defined and publicly accessible. Furthermore, they describe the professional orientation of the programme and meet both academic and professional requirements of graduates in the field of social

work in child rights protection. Beyond that, the intended learning outcomes and programme aims are based on the public needs and the needs of the Lithuanian labour market. On programme as well as on course unit level they are consistent with the type of studies and fulfil the required level of qualifications. The name of the programme, its intended learning outcomes, content and offered qualifications are compatible with each other and not repetitive.

The employability of the graduates is given in an exemplary manner. The experts value the good employment opportunities of the graduates which are linked to the practice-oriented education and the good cooperation of MRU and Lithuanian employers/social partners in developing and evaluating the programme.

Many students have professional experience due to their work activities and the internship they carried out within the course unit Scientific Research Practice. The practical elements of the programme are an asset for the students, because they get valuable insights into the profession of social workers in child rights protection.

The conversation with the employers confirmed the experts' impression that Protection of the Rights of the Child is a unique programme with a distinct profile in Lithuania and therefore very important for the national job market.

According to the expert team, a useful addition to employability is the strong emphasis on the scientific nature of the programme, which is well implemented in the programme objectives, content, intended learning outcomes and examinations.

4.2 Curriculum design

Current situation

The curriculum and study subjects are described in the self-evaluation report, the study plans, programme description and – more detailed regarding content and working methods – in the course units. The Protection of the Rights of the Child programme consists of ten compulsory courses and the preparation of the master thesis.

The scope of the programme is 90 credit points. 60 credit points are awarded for subjects in the field of social work and child rights protection and 30 credit points are devoted for the preparation and defence of the master thesis. The “Master of Social Work” degree is awarded.

The curriculum of the full-time programme has a higher proportion of contact hours compared to the part-time programme, whereas the part-time programme has the same amount of credit points, but a higher proportion of independent work. The full-time programme covers three semesters with 30 credit points each. The part-time programme lasts four semesters with workloads from 18 to 24 credits.

The programme covers contemporary theoretical-methodological directions of child rights protection in the social work study field and integrates knowledge of the implementation of child rights welfare state, welfare of child, social services, determining the best interests of the child. The programme provides a profound preparation for scientific research of social welfare problems and practical work in specific fields of education, social support (services), juvenile justice, health care, social care etc.

In the first semester the full-time students attend course units of theoretical speciality such as Theoretical Models of Social Work, The Strategies of Implementation of the Rights of the Child, Representation of Children's Rights, Methodology of Social Re-

search and select the topic of the master thesis (six credit points each, 30 credit points in total).

In the second semester students attend the course units Social Service Presentation and Management Strategies, Theories and Models of Prevention of Violence Against Children, Juvenile Justice, Counselling and Mediation of Child and Family and prepare the master thesis (six credit points each, 30 credit points in total).

In the third semester students study one theoretical subject – Social Arrangement and Evaluation of Projects – carry out the course unit Scientific Research Practice (six credit points each) and finish the master thesis (18 credit points, 30 credit points in total).

During the third semester the students should implement Scientific Research Practice in the field of studies. Students may combine their internship with stays at foreign institutions offering places for internship.

Taking into account the intensity of studies, part-time students take during the first semester also four examinations (24 credit points); during the second semester they take three examinations and select the topic of the master thesis (total 24 credit points); during the third semester the students have to pass one exam, carry out the Scientific Research Practice and prepare the master thesis (total 18 credit points); during the fourth semester the students have to study one subject and need to finish and defend their master thesis (24 credit points). Overall, the students get 30 credit points for their master thesis both in the full-time and part-time programme.

The self-evaluation report described in detail that the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme is designed according to several Lithuanian legal acts, international legal acts and MRU legal acts.

Assessment

The experts confirm that with this unique programme in Lithuania the MRU occupies a very good position to compete with other Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions. While the other universities offer more traditional programmes, the MRU has deliberately chosen and developed a modern approach, which is attractive for young people.

The experts assess the curriculum as well structured and logical. The subjects and course units are spread evenly, their themes are not repetitive and they cover nearly the relevant content and competences to meet the programme objectives and prepare the graduates for their professional tasks. Although the content and methods of the subjects are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, the experts state that the topic International Law is underrepresented in the curriculum.

The curriculum design meets the legal requirements and the content of the subjects is consistent with the type and level of the studies. Furthermore, the scope of the programme is in general sufficient to ensure the intended learning outcomes and the content of the curriculum also reflect new developments in the field. The experts find the labour market and society oriented choice of the study subjects positive and remarkable.

The experts also appreciate that students are encouraged to work not only empirically but to deal also with current cases and urgent topics, coming from social partners and institutions, which are related to child rights protection.

The experts appreciate the variety of learning methods, which are used in the curriculum, and especially commend the activity methods (e. g. problem analysis, creation of insights and development scenarios, role-play, video training etc.), which are a great

opportunity for the students to acquire creative problem solving competencies. Furthermore, the use of moodle in the faculty is an important tool for teaching and learning, especially for the close contact between teachers and part-time students.

The descriptions of the course units are generally exemplary and give the students and teaching staff a comprehensive overview over the content, intended learning outcomes, workload and assessment methods of the course units.

Recommendation

According to the demand for highly qualified social workers in child rights protection, the experts fully support the focus of the programme. However, with regard to internationalisation the experts would like to encourage the faculty to expand the education of social workers in the international context. Therefore, the experts strongly recommend to integrate the topic International Law into the course unit The Strategies of Implementation of the Rights of the Child. International law is vital for an international view on child rights protection. Therefore, it should be integrated into the curriculum, in order to ensure a holistic education of the future social workers in child rights protection. In this context it is also strongly recommended to integrate more and regular literature and publications in English about child rights protection topics into the course units.

4.3 Teaching staff

Current situation

The qualifications and practical work experience of the academic staff of the programme correspond to the requirements of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and Description of General Requirements for the Master's Study Programmes for university teachers. The selection of academic staff at MRU is performed on the basis of general job requirements of Mykolas Romeris University for the qualification of university teachers and scientific workers (2012) and the Statute of Mykolas Romeris University.

The programme is carried out by 18 academic staff members whose scientific research interests and/or fields of practical activities correlate with the subjects they teach. The course units are taught by four professors, nine associate professors, three lecturers with a doctorate degree (PhD) and two lecturers without a doctorate degree (PhD).

22 % of the university teachers that teach in the programme are professors and 89 % hold a doctoral degree (PhD). For 16 (89 %) of the university teachers is the MRU their main workplace. Some of the professors and lecturers respectively work part-time as university teachers and as director, head, international projects coordinator and scientist in institutions such as e. g. State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Agency of International Youth Cooperation and Centre for Communicable Diseases and AIDS.

According to the Mykolas Romeris University norms of teachers' workload calculation (Senate Resolution No. 1SN-40 on 2 April 2013) and Mykolas Romeris University provision of formation and calculation of teachers' workload (Rector's decree No. II-292 on 8 May 2013) the workload of full-time university teachers is 1,530 annual hours, 36 hours per week. The yearly workload is divided into teaching (1,000 hours), scientific research (400 hours) and organisational work (130 hours).

As described in the self-evaluation report the academic staff members participate in and share their scientific experience at national and international scientific conferences and workshops. They are also involved in national and international research projects and publish articles in Lithuanian and international scientific journals. Some teachers are actively involved in staff exchange programmes and raised their qualification in areas as e. g. children's rights in a global world, learning for well-being and developmental education.

Furthermore, the teachers regularly attend internal and external training in order to acquire new knowledge, experience and skills for the teaching and learning processes. Among others, one method of professional development (educational, scientific and practical) of the staff is e. g. in-service training courses which are continuously held for the teachers at the university. In addition, every teacher also participates in local or international in-service training courses in the areas of their scientific interests. Furthermore, the connection between science and practice is also strengthened through teachers who share their practical experience in their research field with their colleagues and students. Some university teachers are members of different trade unions, commissions, committees, societies or associations and take part in working groups of the legislative process or law modification.

Assessment

The expert team assesses the teaching staff as adequate both in qualification as well as in number to ensure the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Moreover, the academic staff meets all legal requirements. According to the statements of the programme representatives during the site visit the teaching staff turnover is no problem for the adequate provision of the programme.

The experts are very impressed by the high commitment and motivation of the teachers. The students confirmed that the teaching staff is easily accessible for them in all concerns, if needed. They also appreciate the open and respectful communication culture with all members who are involved in the programme. Furthermore, the teachers are very ambitious and willing to further develop and improve their professional qualifications and skills.

The teachers of the programme are also involved in national and international scientific research projects and their research interests are directly related to the programme. In this context, the MRU supports the professional development of the teaching staff, which is necessary for the provision of the programme. The combination of full-time and part-time professors and lecturers is also a win for the practical relevance.

The general distribution of the workload of teachers in the areas of teaching, research and organisation contributes to the good working conditions at the MRU. The experts got the impression, that there are sufficient opportunities for further didactical training and that the teachers use them regularly due to intrinsic motivation and conviction.

4.4 Facilities and learning resources

Current situation

The overall impression of the MRU is that the university is located in modern buildings with pleasant interior and elaborated technical equipment. The seminar and computer rooms used by the programme are shared with other programmes and were visited by the experts during the site visit. The computer rooms are equipped with modern soft-

ware, auditoriums for general lectures and seminars are equipped with modern furniture and latest multimedia equipment such as writing boards and screens, personal computers, television sets, audio and video recorders, multimedia system projectors, smart boards, wireless internet access etc. Furthermore, the university is accessible for people with disabilities.

A network data storage facility is installed in the data centre of the university alongside with virtual servers. The worldwide roaming access service eduroam (education roaming) and email service for all university members are implemented too. Furthermore, numerous other technical services (e. g. storage of personal and collective (divisions, project) data, assignment of personal identifications, installation and update of operating systems etc.) are offered and professionally maintained to support teaching and learning. The requirements for e-learning are developed extensively.

The Mykolas Romeris University library provides traditional and electronic resources of scientific information. Readers can select between different working areas such as reading rooms, silent reading rooms of group studies and internet reading rooms. The library is accessible for readers with disabilities and offers two specialised computer work stations for persons with motor and eyesight impairments. In total, the library accommodates 410 places for reading (with wireless internet and power sockets for laptops), 145 computer work stations and seven scanners. The library is located in the central building and is open almost around the clock, seven days a week, 141 hours. In 2013, the library collection consisted of 240,700 copies of publications and 200 subscribed periodicals titles. 29,700 electronic journals and 241,800 electronic books are accessible. The readers can use several international databases, which provide a lot of information related to the field of social work, such as: Academic Search Complete (via EBSCOhost), eBooks on EBSCOhost (e-knygos), Ebrary (e-knygos), JSTOR Collections, MasterFILE Premier (via EBSCOhost), Oxford University Press Journals, SAGE Journals Online, Science Direct, Science Direct eBooks, SocINDEX with Full Text (via EBSCOhost), Taylor & Francis Online etc.

Furthermore, the university created the mobile applications “MRU” and “MRU contacts”, which are available at Apple App Store and Google Play. They enable the university members to read MRU news, check the studies calendar and search for contacts.

Assessment

According to the experts, the facilities for the programme and the teaching and learning equipment are both excellent in size and quality to provide a pleasant teaching and learning atmosphere. The experts commend the MRU for its excellent and up to date media equipment, which provides excellent conditions for a diverse academic education of the students. Especially noteworthy is the professional technical support, which helps the teachers to adequately use the technical applications.

Most teachers do not have their own office. Therefore, the experts assess the pleasant furnished lounge for teachers as a good way to get in touch and communicate.

The experts are impressed by the excellent facilities of the library. The university has adequate arrangements for students' practice and with the latest technical equipment students have in the library excellent working conditions for their studies. However, during the site visit the experts observed that with regard to internationalisation not all important current literature on the key topics of child rights protection are available, especially not in English, whereas the access to major international databases is given and adequate.

Recommendation

With regard to internationalisation the experts strongly recommend that literature and publications in English about child rights protection topics are extended and regularly updated.

4.5 Study process and student's performance assessment

Current situation

The procedure of admission to the programme, the number of students and the rules are set by the MRU. The admission requirements are regulated by MRU Senate Resolution No. 1SN-46 Rules of Admission of Persons to Mykolas Romeris University Second Cycle (Master's) Studies (2013). The rules are updated annually.

Students with a university bachelor's degree in any study field can apply to the programme. Students who have a bachelor degree in another field of studies than social work/educational science or have a college level bachelor degree (professional bachelor degree) can enter the programme after additional studies. Students who have no background in educational science must complete the following two supplementary subjects during the first semester: Methods of Social Work and Social Work Theory.

The MRU informs the expert team during the site visit, that all applicants are accepted, who meet the admission requirements as the MRU – same as other Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania – suffers from a shortage of students. The programme starts once a year in September. In order to meet the admission requirements for a master programme at a Lithuanian university, graduates with a college level bachelor degree (professional bachelor degree) need to attend one and a half years of bridge courses.

The programme is offered as a full-time and part-time option. The part-time programme offers the same content, but is spread over two instead of one and a half years to allow students to work during their studies. The main differences between full-time and part-time studies are the arrangement of the time of studies and distribution among contact hours and independent work. The studies for full-time students are organised each week (except internships or holidays), for part-time students the studies are organised in sessions.

The number of applications for admission to the full-time studies increased, but the number of applicants for the part-time studies decreased every year. The MRU assumes, that the people who were working in institutions related to child rights protection had a great need to raise their qualification, which is shown by the great interest in the part-time programme after its introduction and the large number of submitted applications. However, after the implementation of the programme, the great need for competence development was satisfied. Therefore, the interest in the part-time studies and the number of applications has decreased steadily. Another reason for this development is the decreasing population of the country due to intensive emigration.

In 2008/2009, the MRU started the programme with 12 full-time and 26 part-time students. In 2013/2014, there were 20 full-time and 23 part-time students enrolled in the programme.

The study process is organised in two semesters per year and comprises subjects of the study field, scientific research practice and the preparation and defence of the master thesis. A variety of working methods are offered such as lectures, seminars, practices, discussions, essays, individual and online consultations, individual and/or group assignments, mind-maps, case studies, case analysis, situation modelling,

presentations, workshops, debates, projects, reflections, portfolios and independent work. The teaching methods and its distribution are listed in detail in the course unit description.

Every course unit ends with a student assessment. The Procedure for the Assessment of Mykolas Romeris University Learning Outcomes should establish principles and criteria for the assessment of the learning outcomes of study subjects and study programmes, the procedure for the preparation and assessment of the fulfilment of examinations and other academic credits, of students' written works, final examinations and theses at the university. The assessment system is presented in the description of each course unit. With exception of the master thesis the assessment is composed of at least two different assessment forms and combined according to a predefined formula. This leads to a variety of different examination methods, e. g. written and oral exams, tests, papers, practical works, project reports, study diary etc., which assess different competences. The assessment methods and formulas to create the final mark are described in the description of the course units, which are publicly available. The individual marks are assessed and processed by the lecturer of the course and the final mark is submitted to the electronic information system "Studies", which is linked with information for students and with study administration process.

In the last five years the general dropout rate for the programme was very different and ranged from 6 % to 38 % (self-evaluation report, page 25). According to the faculty members as well as the students the main reasons for dropout or suspension of studies are various e. g. disease, birth of a child and taking care of it, job change/job rotation, difficulties to reconcile work and studies and financial problems. The dropout rate of part-time students is almost always higher than of full-time students. One explanation for that is the fact that part-time students face greater difficulties in compatibility of studies, work and family.

The MRU offers both a psychological service as well as a large number of individual consultation hours for full-time and part-time students. The Psychological Service of the Faculty of Social Technologies provides psychological counselling, psychological assessment, non-formal education and training. The service is confidential and free of charge. The counselling offers can help to address individual problems of the students (compatibility of studies, work and family) and to support them so that they can continue their studies, if needed.

With the course unit Scientific Research Practice the programme includes – among other practice elements – an internship in the field of social work with six credit points. The students independently look for an institution related to child rights protection, but in case of need the faculty provides support through their contacts and social partners. Before the practical work placements starts, the student, institution and responsible lecturer agree on the task that should be performed during the internship.

The master thesis is mostly written at the MRU under the supervision of a lecturer. However, during the course unit Scientific Research Practice students conduct scientific research and may collect data related to the selected topic of the master thesis. The preparation of the thesis is implemented in three steps. During the first step information search and literature analysis on the selected topic is carried out for developing a theoretical justification of the thesis. In the second step the awareness of the problem is deepened, empirical research methods and organisation stages are predicted, survey instruments are constructed and survey data are collected. During the third step the research data are analysed and interpreted, conclusions are drawn, the selected scientific or practical problem is analysed and the thesis is completed. Social partners can present and suggest urgent topics for empirical researches according to the field

of their activity. They are also included into the Commission for the Defence of Master's Thesis.

Students have the opportunity to participate in mobility programmes. The MRU takes actively part in the Erasmus programme and has about 287 partner institutions. However, the bachelor students participate more actively in mobility programmes, whereas most master students work and have families, therefore it is complicated for them to reconcile academic mobility, family and work activity. The number of incoming exchange or full-time students is low, because the programme does not yet offer the course units in English.

After finishing their studies the majority of the graduates find mostly successfully – according to the information of the MRU – a job in state or non-governmental organisations which provide social services for children and youth. The graduates can work in state, municipal and non-governmental level in specific fields of education, social support (services), juvenile justice, health care, social care etc.

Assessment

To the expert team assesses the admission requirements as well-founded and the study process of the programme as well organised and balanced. The organisation of the study process is adequate to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The students and graduates confirmed during the site visit that they are very satisfied with their study situation and appreciate MRU due to its good reputation and job opportunities. The students also mentioned the very close and easy contact with their lecturers. The assessment scheme is transparently described and uses multiple assessment methods to check different competences of the students. The programme documents are publicly available on the MRU's websites.

The MRU also offers its students opportunities for international mobility. The expert team encourages the university to strengthen the mobility programmes and to further motivate master students to participate in student exchange. Therefore, the existing partnerships could be used and the Erasmus cooperation should be further expanded. The experts also emphasise the importance of course units in English for local students. One necessary precondition to increase mobility is to provide favourable conditions for incoming students. Therefore, the experts see it as indispensable to offer course units in English in order to increase the attractiveness of the MRU for foreign exchange students.

In the view of the experts the academic and social support of the students is outstanding. With the Psychological Service of the faculty and consultation hours for full-time and part-time students the MRU ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. The lecturers are highly committed to find individual solutions for students in special situations. The experts are impressed about the diverse support measures of the university and encourage the MRU to pursue these measures, and monitor the results with regard to the dropout rates in the programme.

The students reported during the site visit a clearly structured study process and that they are encouraged to participate in (applied) research activities. Overall, the students are very satisfied with their situation at the MRU. Lodging seems to be no problem, also due to the good supply of student housing by the MRU.

Due to the close cooperation with social partners and employers in updating the programme and the practical period during the programme, almost all students are able to find appropriate jobs in their profession. The students as well as the graduates mentioned during the site visit that finding a job is not a big issue as they see themselves

largely well prepared to work in the field of social work with the focus on child rights protection.

Recommendation

The experts explicitly acknowledge and appreciate this unique programme in Lithuania and want to encourage the programme representatives, to further expand their contacts with other European Higher Education Institutions, who offer a similar programme in the field of child rights protection. Advanced, close and continuous cooperation and exchange with other universities broadens the perspective on the issue of child rights protection and show the development and country-specific differences in the European and international context.

In order to encourage and strengthen the international mobility of the students, the experts recommend strengthening the English language education of the students and offering courses in English in order to attract foreign exchange students. Therefore, the English language skills of the teaching staff needs to be strengthened as well. In this context, the experts suggest as one possibility to encourage lecturers to engage more in staff exchange programmes. Another possibility would be to invite more foreign lecturers, to the programme to provide courses in English. This would also give the teachers and students the opportunity to get in touch with foreign approaches in the field of child rights protection.

4.6 Programme management

Current situation

According to the self-evaluation report, quality assurance is based on a general agreement of the academic community with regard to the application and development of a quality culture. That means that the entire academic community participates in the processes of evaluation, monitoring and other quality assurance. Each member of the university is responsible to contribute to the quality of the study programmes according to their duties, competences and commissions. The quality assurance policy and procedures are laid out in several legal acts of the MRU and are reflected among others in the recruitment process, the regulations for programme and quality assurance committees etc.

The university uses the following tools and procedures of quality assurance: approval procedure, monitoring and periodic evaluation of the programmes, assessment of academic outcome, recruitment process and qualification improvement system for teachers, students and graduates surveys etc. Additionally, there are several meetings between students and the teaching staff, the member of the dean's office and members of the rectorate concerning the quality of the programmes and their improvement. Changes in the labour market, expectations of employers and pupils are analysed on faculty and institute level.

The internal system of quality assurance is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. There is a clear distribution of responsibilities for quality assurance between the senate, rectorate, study quality assurance committee, faculty, institutes, study programme committee and the individual teacher and student: Senate, Rectorate and Study Quality Assurance Committee are responsible for the formation and implementation of the university's study quality policy. The Faculties, Institutes and Study Programme Committee are in charge of the

quality of the programmes and their realisation (e. g. programme meet needs of students and labour market, supervision of curriculum, renewal and fulfilment of programme objectives, selection of staff, initiation of quality improvement etc.). Among others, the Centre of Academic Affairs is responsible for the initiation and preparation of legislation, quality of study process, coordination and support for the creation and renewal of programmes. The teachers are responsible for the quality of the subjects they teach (e. g. achievement of learning results, creative and innovative teaching methods, quality of study material and adaption to latest scientific achievements etc.). In MRU's view, the students are also responsible for their personal learning results and quality of their studies. They are expected to comply with academic discipline, university ethics and other requirements of the university community, which are intended for the quality of the study process. All programmes are monitored by study programme committees, in which teachers, students and representatives of stakeholders/social partners are involved.

MRU publishes all legal acts, orders, process descriptions and documents as well as qualitative and quantitative information on the programmes, qualifications and achievements of the university and the teachers on their website. Furthermore, everyone has access to the online provided information about qualitative and quantitative data about the MRU (e. g. accreditation period of each programme, labour statistics and data on graduate employment).

Subjects of the revision processes are the learning outcomes, students' competencies, programme contents and structures, exam results, students' data, students' workload, causes for dropout and the services for students.

Based on the system of quality assurance the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme is renewed, study plans are revised and new learning and assessment methods are introduced.

Assessment

The experts certify that the MRU has implemented a comprehensive quality management system. It can be assessed as exemplary in the European Higher Education Area. All organisational levels and necessary stakeholders are involved and their responsibilities and tasks are clearly described and published. During the site visit, the students confirmed that they are involved in all processes and have plenty of opportunities to participate and criticise. It is their impression that their concerns are taken seriously. A strictly systematic and methodologically sophisticated approach of quality management is clearly visible. The quality cycles are closed on all levels and they work steadily and reliably. The MRU, faculty and institutes invest for it enough time and resources. The experts were particularly impressed, how dedicated the representatives of the programme are on the quality and continuous development.

It is also particularly noteworthy, that the labour market statistics of the programme are published on the website of the MRU. These show that in terms of the programme objectives, the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme is efficient and effective. The experts also emphasise the good integration of the employers into the programme management and the explicit orientation towards the need of the labour market.

Also noteworthy is the good cooperation between the central service unit for quality management and the stakeholders involved in the programme. The support is efficient and target-oriented. Regarding the instruments and procedures, there is a good balance between effort and benefit. The teaching staff does not feel burdened and stressed by too much bureaucracy. They rather share all necessary tasks in terms of quality and accept it as part of their work.

It is the impression of the experts, that the representatives of the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme use the quality management system for continuous improvements. The self-evaluation report and the conversations during the site visit showed, that data and developments are differentiated and self-critical analysed.

In sum: the responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the programme implementation are clearly assigned and information and data are regularly collected and analysed. Furthermore, the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the continuous improvement of the programme. The evaluation and improvement processes involve all stakeholders and the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient.

5. Overall assessment

The experts acknowledge the open and respectful communication culture, pleasant working environment and visibly high commitment and dedication for continuous development and innovation of the university administration, programme representatives, teachers and students. They are also impressed by the solidity, attractiveness and sustainability of the programme concepts.

In general, the expert team assesses the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme positively. The content and structure of the programme is coherent and convincing as well as of scientific and pedagogical-didactic quality. The MRU provides a profound education and prepares the students well for their future profession. The programme objectives and learning outcomes are convincing as well as the consistent labour market orientation especially in such a difficult economic environment. Furthermore, the field of child rights protection is of high relevance to society, the distinct and future-oriented profile of the programme is very important for the national job market. It was a strategically wise decision to combine law aspects with fundamental areas of modern social life. For this approach, there are very good conditions at the MRU, such as the cooperation with the Faculty of Law.

The experts appreciate that the focus of the university lies on quality, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity. In terms of internationalisation, the competition with other local, national and European universities is quite noticeable in some aspects of the programme and it is one reason for the high motivation of the MRU, faculty and teachers. The experts see in the internationalisation the main area for development. In terms of future competition with other higher education institutions, the experts strongly encourage the MRU to further internationalise the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme by integration of international law aspects into the curriculum and also by improvement of English literature and English language skills of the students and teachers.

The curriculum and study process are clearly structured and appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The programme management and quality management system are excellent to manage and improve the programme. The experts value the close cooperation of the MRU with employers and social partners in order to support the study process, constantly develop the programme and focus on the competences of the graduates to the needs of the labour market. A strength of the programme is the high employability of the students. It is a vital indication that the study contents are well placed to prepare students for the practice.

According to the experts, the Protection of the Rights of the Child programme meets the Lithuanian requirements for programme accreditation. Therefore, the team recommends the programme for accreditation.

The expert team also recommends awarding the **evalag** label for international programme accreditation as the programme meets the Lithuanian evaluation criteria for programmes on which the label is based. The team recommends that the MRU consider and implement the recommendations in this report to further improve the programme.

6. Decision of the accreditation commission

The accreditation commission of **evalag** accredited the master programme Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) and awarded the **evalag** label for international programme accreditation. The accreditation is valid **from 7 July 2014 until 31 August 2020**.

To further improve the programme the accreditation commission affirms the recommendations given by the expert team.

7. Evaluation scores and scale

Evaluation scores of the programme Protection of the Rights of the Child

No	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of the area, points
1	Programme aims and learning outcomes	4
2	Curriculum design	3
3	Teaching staff	4
4	Facilities and learning resources (facilities, equipment, learning materials)	4
5	Study process and students' performance assessment (student selection, performance assessment, support)	4
6	Programme management (administration of the programme, internal quality assurance)	4
	Total	23 Maximum score: 24

Evaluation scale

Level/Score	Evaluation	Description
1	Unsatisfactory	There are essential irregularities to be eliminate
2	Satisfactory	Meets the minimum requirements, requires improvement
3	Good	The area is systemically developed and possesses original features
4	Very good	The area is exceptionally good