

Accreditation report

Accreditation procedure

Mykolas Romeris University Vilnius (Lithuania)

“Social Work” (1st cycle), “Social Work” (2nd cycle) and “International Politics and Economics” (2nd cycle)

I Procedure

Date of Contract: 08/01/2015

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Standing Expert Committee: Economics, Law and Social Sciences

Attendance by the ACQUIN Office: Dr. Stefan Handke

Decisions of the Accreditation Commission: 31/03/2016

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The **Evaluation report** of the peer group is based on the self-evaluation report of the HEI and extensive discussions with the heads of the study programmes, staff representatives, students and employers. The reviewers thank the organisers and the participating teachers and students of the on-site visit in Vilnius that they were available for the discussions and have been prepared to provide information on programmes and university. The participation is perceived as very valuable not only for evaluating the programmes, but also for a better understanding of the legal and socio-cultural background of the Lithuanian higher education system, in particular the Mykolas Romeris University.

Evaluation Criteria have been the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) in the actual official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national rules regulating the establishment of study programmes, has been taken into account.

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II Introduction

1 **Short Profile of Mykolas Romeris University**

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) is the second largest university in Lithuania. MRU was established in 2004 by the Resolution of the Seimas (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania) and is named after Professor Mykolas Pijus Paskalis Romeris, a founder of the Lithuanian Constitutional Law. Before, the university existed as a law university since 1990. MRU successfully operates in a competitive environment on a national and international level. With the aim of internationalisation, the university cooperates with more than 200 international institutions including universities, public and management institutions.

Approximately 16.000 students are currently enrolled; about 250 among them are foreign nationals. MRU offers more than 100 study programmes (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, also non-degree programmes) and students can choose programmes from the disciplines Law, Public Administration, Economics, Finance Management, Psychology, Social Work, Social Policy, Sociology or Educology.

Studies are carried out in the following faculties: Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Finance Management, Faculty of Politics and Management, Faculty of Social Welfare and Faculty of Public Security. Further, the university's structure comprises the Business and Media School with the status of a faculty. Except of the Faculty of Public Security, all faculties are located in Vilnius, whereas the Faculty of Public Security is located in Kaunas, about 100 km away from Vilnius.

The five faculties of Mykolas Romeris University offer the following *Bachelor's degree programmes*: Law, Informatics and Digital Contents (joint study programme with Korea's Dongseo University, DSU), English for Specific Purposes and a Second Foreign Language, Financial Economics (offered by Business and Media School in conjunction with U.K.'s Middlesex University), Tourism Management and a Heritage, Psychology, Social Work. As second cycle education, Master's degree programmes cover Business Informatics (with Fernando Pessoa University in Portugal), Communication and Creative Technologies, European and International Business Law, (in partnership with the French University of Savoie Mont Blanc), EU Law and Governance (in partnership with Bordeaux University), Electronic Business Management, Financial Markets (dual degree with U.K. Middlesex University), International Law (in cooperation with Ukraine's Jaroslav the Wise National Law University), Legal Regulation of Public Administration and Human Rights (in partnership with Taras Shevchenko National University Kiev), Psychology, Social Technology Management, Social Work with Youth and Children (with Stradins University Riga), or Work and Organizational Psychology.

In 2005 MRU introduced a Joint International Law Master's Programme and Joint Master's Programme in Comparative Social Policy and Welfare. Further, the university offers some Master's

degree programmes in English, namely EU Policy and Administration, Information Technology Law, International Law, European Union Law, Welfare Sociology, Psychology.

The faculties are supported by central offices at the university, in the first place by a Centre for Academic Affairs, responsible for supervising, drafting and implementing study programmes, study quality assurance, distance and international studies and student admission. Further, a Centre for Science, Communication and Marketing is responsible for supervising marketing and international relations activity.

2 The programmes in the faculties' framework

The study programmes "Social Work" (I cycle) and "Social Work" (II cycle) reside at the Faculty of Social Welfare. The faculty comprises four institutes, which are "Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work", "Institute of Communication and Mediation", "Institute of Psychology" and "Institute of Digital Technologies". At the faculty the "Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work" is responsible for the study programmes in "Social Work". Besides the two assessed programmes, the institute runs programmes in "Leisure and Entertainment Education", "Psychology", "Social pedagogy", "Psychology, and "Sociology".

The study programme "International Politics and Economics" is part of the portfolio of the Faculty of Politics and Management, which is the largest faculty at Mykolas Romeris University. The faculty trains specialists in the fields of public administration, political science, management and business administration. Faculty scholars explore governmental, municipal and business policy issues, analyse legal acts and consult administrative institutions. The faculty comprises four institutes: "Institute of Management", "Institute of Public Administration", "Institute of Philosophy and Humanities", and "Institute of Political sciences", which is responsible for the here assessed programme.

3 Results of previous accreditations

The study programmes "Social Work" (I cycle) and "Social Work" (II cycle) have been accredited for the first time in 2010 by the German accreditation agency AHPGS. Both programmes received the accreditation for a period of 6 year.

The accreditation decision has been taken without any conditions, but with the following recommendations:

Social Work (I cycle)

- The study structure of the Bachelor study programme could be developed in the future to enable the consolidation of several, thematically related subjects into larger modules offered on an interdisciplinary basis.

Social Work (II cycle)

- With all due respect for involved scientific staff, it is noticeable that their scientific competences are still being developed. This is reflected by the many doctoral candidates among the teaching staff. Unfortunately, they complete their doctoral degrees at other higher education institutions. In order to increase the attractiveness of international exchange programmes, the experts explicitly recommend increasing the number of professorial positions in the faculty and to grant the faculty the right to offer doctoral degrees in social work as soon as possible – and if necessary on a limited trial basis.

Experiences and explanations of the university regarding the recommendations, as well as an evaluation of the expert group are mentioned in chapters 2.1.1 and 3.1.1 of this report.

III Evaluation

1 Objectives of university and faculties

According to the mission of Mykolas Romeris University, it is the goal of the university to educate society, to accumulate and cherish intellectual potential, to educate leaders capable of creating and introducing innovations that determine diverse scientific, cultural and technological progress. MRU aims at educating a personality which is mature, entrepreneurial, an independent leader of the future, and a citizen fostering Lithuanian identity.

As key strategic priorities MRU defines creating new attractive national and joint study programmes developed in collaboration with foreign universities, fostering lifelong learning and electronic studies, and research activity. The self-evaluation report of the university refers to the MRU Statute, which sets out the main goal of its activity. This is to carry out studies which provide a person with university higher education based on research and advanced level of knowledge and technologies, a higher education qualification, develop a thoroughly educated, ethically responsible, creative and entrepreneurial person.

These principals are not only part of the statute, but also determine the so-called MRU Strategic Activity Plan 2010–2020, which includes the development of new market-oriented study programmes, development and implementation of joint study programmes created in collaboration with foreign universities, internationalisation, and development of distance studies, qualitative and qualitative growth of research. With these issues MRU seeks to develop unique selling points in competition with other national universities and HEIs from abroad.

The university points out that the competition for qualified students becomes fiercer due to a complicated demographic situation in Lithuania. These demographic factors are said to result in a sharp decrease in the number of students in the future, by inconsistency of the state policy on higher education, its poor funding and in general by the growing competition among universities in Europe.

With the aim to be successful in the future, MRU and each faculty create and implement study programmes, which are attractive for national and foreign students. Graduates should gain best chances to have access to the European labour market with skills and competences being acquired at MRU.

Among the university's programmes, Master's programmes should particularly foster the development of analytically thinking specialists, who are able to solve problems in the various fields of scientific research and practice. Upon the completion of the second-cycle studies at MRU, students have comprehensive and systematic knowledge and understanding of the study field, which extend the knowledge acquired in the first-cycle; the students are able to use the context of scientific

research and develop and implement their ideas in a creative way as well as to tackle problems in a new or unfamiliar multidisciplinary environment, to integrate their knowledge and solve complicated problems in the absence of complete or full information, to make ethical and socially responsible decisions, to clearly and unambiguously convey scientific knowledge-based findings to expert and non-expert audiences.

Therefore, besides knowledge and competences linked to the specific subject, students of the three assessed programmes acquire competences, which are summarised as soft-skills and personal competences. They gain knowledge and skills which pave the way for the development of own ideas, the judgment on the basis of market and business information in various sectors, communication of thoughts and the ability to solve problems relevant to the society. Further, graduates in each of the assessed programmes, have well-developed self-study skills, which allow a focused and creative development of their professional life, participation in public life and further studies.

2 Objectives and concepts of study programme “Social Work” (I cycle)

2.1 Objectives of the study programme

2.1.1 Short summary of the study programme and previous accreditation

The Bachelor’s programme “Social Work” aims at a basic education in the sphere of social work to train professionals, who are able to deal with a broad spectrum of social problems. The programme has been positively assessed for the last time by the accreditation agency AHPGS in 2010. The then expert group assessed the programme very positively. The group only recommended the “consolidation of several, thematically related subjects into larger modules offered on an interdisciplinary basis”. However, according to the university, there is no leeway for the programme leaders to integrate more interdisciplinary modules into the programme, since national legal regulations are not allowing such an approach.

As to the current accreditation procedure, the expert group finds the target group of the programme, which are graduates of secondary education and practitioners from social work field without any social work degree, well defined. This group of students receives a basic and solid education in social work and complementary subjects, such as law, psychology, medicine, sociology and sports or arts. Students acquire professional competences during a period of 7 semesters in full-time studies or 10 semesters in part-time studies. After the successful graduation, students receive a Bachelor’s degree of a programme with 210 ECTS credits.

The university itself does not set any limitation for the number of student which can be enrolled for the fee-paying programme, but a students' admission quota is set by the Lithuanian Government in agreement with the Ministry of Education. The number of applications since 2010 declined from a very high level of almost 1550 in 2010/11 to less than 500 in 2014/15. Nevertheless, in each year between 74 (2015/16) and 102 (2013/14) students enrolled for the Bachelor's study programme "Social Work". Students can start with the programme in every year in September.

The full tuition fee amounts to 4760 Euro for the entire time of studies; this equals to 680 Euro per semester of full-time studies and 476 Euro per semester of part-time studies. Mainly due to the tuition fees and parallel day jobs, up to 30 percent of the students of a cohort cancel their studies.

2.1.2 Objectives and competences

According to the self-description of the university it is the mission of the Bachelor's study programme "Social Work" to train social workers of high personal and professional competence. With this broad orientation the programme seeks to educate graduates, who are able to professionally act in spheres of national social life, and who are able to provide high quality social services. Further, the mission of the programme is to strengthen abilities of individuals, groups and communities to adapt to environment through restoration and strengthening of social links, integration into society and sustaining social participation.

Professional competences in social work are acquired in several modules, which are provided by the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work. These core competences are complemented by other disciplines. Also the development of methodical competences is properly considered in the description of the programme. This holds true not only for seminars and lectures, but especially for the practice in the second semester of the programme.

The programme has a broad focus, which enables students to work in very different areas. However, the common background of social work in regard to professional ethics and the connection to social works as a kind of human rights profession are hardly emphasised. This is why the expert group recommends pronouncing ethical aspects, values and professional behaviour in the field of social work stronger in the curriculum.

2.1.3 Employability

Taking into account the objectives of the study programme, the expert group arrives to the conclusion that graduates are well prepared for positions in all kinds of social work institutions. They are able to deal professionally with social problems, such as drug addiction, prostitution, human trafficking or violence against women and children.

Against the background of the social situation in Lithuania, graduates of MRU are meeting the demands of society and the labour market in the field of social work. In this context it is worth to mention that Lithuania started a process of intensive social transformations and a significant change of political and economic principles after the independence of the country in 1990. In this period the phenomenon of social exclusion and the importance and significance of social workers profession arouse. At the same time Lithuania was facing a lack of qualified professionals, since in 1999 most of the 4.000 social worker had no professional education of social work. Therefore, the Lithuania Government established by law qualification requirements and certification procedures for social workers. According to the "Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania" (2006), only a person qualified in social work or equivalent education has the right to work as a social worker. These requirements are met by the Bachelor's programme "Social Work" at MRU.

2.1.4 Conclusion

The programme's objectives and learning outcomes correspond with the requirements for a study programme in the field of social work studies. With its very generalist approach the study programme "Social Work" provides competences, which enable graduates to start immediately in practical social work. This finding is also backed by the fact that most of the students are already working in the field parallel to their studies.

Unfortunately, the advantage of practical experience on the job is not always a matter of professional decisions, but often of economic needs. Since the study programme is fee based, more than 80 percent of the students have to work for financing their education. After finishing studies, graduates often stay in the same institution as before, but either on a better position or with a higher salary. However, wages are still low in the field of social work and the income of professionals in social work is below the national average of employees in general – although the appreciation of social workers is high in the society. As a matter of fact, social workers need high intrinsic motivation to work in this particular field; with the education at MRU they are ready to fulfil their jobs on a good professional level.

2.2 Concept of the study programme

2.2.1 Admission criteria and recognition of competences

The study programme "Social Work" as a Bachelor's degree programmes targets at school leavers with secondary education, but without any further experience in social work. For an admission at MRU Lithuanian applicants to the programme must present their secondary education Matura diploma. Applicants are admitted in a competitive system on the basis of scores. The competitive

score is made of four components, covering “History”, “Mathematics or Information Technologies”, “Geography / Foreign Language / Information Technologies or Mathematics” and “Lithuanian Language and Literature”.

While the application for Lithuanian citizen is organised by the “National Application System” (LAMABPO), foreign applicants have to present their Matura diploma, which needs to be certified by the “Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education”, directly to the university.

Achievements from other study programmes are recognised in the line with the Lisbon Convention; non-formal and informal learning competences can be assessed and recognised according to an internal procedure of Mykolas Romeris University. Upon request, the university can assess non-formal study achievements and recognise the competences acquired on their basis. At MRU the responsibility for establishing the procedure of the assessment of non-formal study achievements and the recognition of competences is vested in faculties, institutes and departments, while the Academic Affairs Centre is in charge of coordinating the process of the assessment.

From the perspective of the expert group, admission criteria and recognition procedure are transparent and adequate for the study programme.

2.2.2 Structure of the study programme

The Bachelor’s study programme “Social Work” is structured into 7 semesters with 30 ECTS credits each in full-time studies. The first and second semester comprise the compulsory basic modules “Educology”, “Introduction to social work”, “Introduction to Studies”, “Philosophy”, “Psychology”, “Social Work Theory and Practice (General Part)”, “Foreign Language for Specific Purposes (English / French / German)”, “Lithuanian for Specific Purposes”, “Social Work Theory and Practice (Special Part)” and “Voluntary Social Work and Volunteering Practice”. As optional subjects “Aesthetics”, “Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment”, “Healthy Lifestyle”, “Public Communications”, “Penitentiary Law” and “Protection of Child’s Rights” are offered.

The third and fourth semester comprise the compulsory modules “Basics of Sociocultural Work”, “Ethics of Social Activity”, “Integration of People with Disabilities into Society”, “Methodology of Social Work (General Part)”, “Social Counselling”, “Social Education”, “Labour Law”, “Methodology of Social Work (Special Part)”, “Social Policy”, “Socialization of Children and Youth” and an “Elective Study Subject”. The modules are complemented by optional courses, such as “Social Work Practice in Juvenile Correction System”, “Social Work Practice with Individual”, “Fundamentals of Social Work with Youth” or “Tactics of Professional Activity”.

The semesters 5 and 6 draw attention to “Basics of Social Research”, “Fundamentals of Andragogy”, “Social Assistance Team Formation and Management”, “Social Work with Family”, “Socio-Educational Projects and Programs”, “Basics in Social Psychology”, “Social Activities of the Community”, “Social Gerontology”, “Social Work in Health Care Institutions”, “Social Work with

Risk Groups” and “Theory of Economics”. As elective components the curriculum stresses on practical modules such as “Social Work Practice in Correctional Institutions” or “Social Work Practice with Groups”, and “Social Work Practice at Correctional Inspectorates” or “Social Work Practice in Community”.

During the seventh semester students study in the module “Application of Research Processing Programmes”, write their Bachelor Thesis, and choose either the module “Administrative Activities in Correctional Institutions” or “Social Work with Different Youth Groups”.

The curriculum covers all necessary components of a Bachelor’s degree programme in social work. Like that the university meets the expectations of a disciplinary education in the field, which can be also found at other European universities. It is worth to mention that the compulsory components of the programme are reasonably completed by optional subjects.

2.2.3 ECTS and modularisation

The study programme follows the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, by fully introducing ECTS credits into the study system as national credits. The total amount of studies is 210 ECTS credits; 60 ECTS credits correspond to the workload of a full-time year in the programme. Each module has a size of 3 to 8 ECTS credits, only the Bachelor’s thesis amounts to 12 ECTS credits. According the national regulation, 15 ECTS credits have to be devoted to practical components; at MRU the Bachelor’s programme comprises 21 ECTS credits of practice and underlines the practical orientation of the programme. One credit corresponds to 27 hours of work. In total the programme consists of a student workload of 5670 hours.

The contribution of ECTS credits, the distribution of workloads and the modularisation of the programme did not give rise to objections. The descriptions of study subjects and of individual courses, which are available at MRU’s website, are adequate. Content and learning outcomes, instructional practice, participation requirements, the examination system etc., are well defined in module descriptions.

2.2.4 Teaching methods and study contexts

The various courses rely on a range of teaching methods, combining traditional lectures, and more interactive and student-led seminars relying on discussions, methods of project development, writing essays, individual consultations, on-line consultations, group work, independent work, reflection, interactive games, case analysis, and experiential learning.

Interviews with faculty members confirmed that many courses use a practice-oriented approach to teaching and learning. These appear particularly suited to develop the range of professional, methodological and generic skills envisaged by the study programme. Moreover, as many of the teaching staff members are qualified professionals who combine academic qualifications with

practical experiences (as social workers, managers of social institutions, etc.), they are able to bring into the class-room real-life situations and discuss it against more theoretical materials and scholarly works. Seminars, project work and other teaching formats are adequate and support students to reach the objectives of the programme in terms of competences.

In addition to in class activities, students benefit from various study visits in social work institutions. The practical components also contribute to fostering relevant professional and social skills, and throughout the programme, students benefit from the close proximity with professionals working in relevant fields. Teaching is also supported by the use of the Moodle e-learning platform to share course materials, give instructions about tasks, and communicate with students.

2.2.5 Conclusion

The programme curriculum appears to be well designed, and covers the most important aspects of social work education. The teaching load, and the mix of teaching methods, between lectures, seminars, practical projects and coursework, seems appropriate. However, it would be better for the curriculum document to define more clearly where professional aspects in regard to values, ethics and professional attitude are taught.

The balance of ECTS credits appears to be appropriate, and the weighting of the Bachelor's thesis laudable. The elective subjects offer a reasonable supplement to the mandatory subjects. MRU has demonstrated a well-elaborated extensive "Social Work" programme which has been run properly since the last accreditation in 2010.

3 Objectives and concepts of study programme "Social Work" (II cycle)

3.1 Objectives of the study programme

3.1.1 Short summary of the study programme and previous accreditation

The Master's programme "Social Work" aims at an advanced education in the sphere of social work to train professionals, who are able to shape the field of social work and deal with exceptional problems in a variety of social issues. The programme has been positively assessed for the last time by the accreditation agency AHPGS in 2010. The then experts recommended "increasing the number of professorial positions in the faculty and to grant the faculty the right to offer doctoral degrees in social work as soon as possible – and if necessary on a limited trial basis". This recommendation is not implemented as in compliance with the "Law of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania On Approving Fields of Science", which determines the official classification fields of science, social work is not separated as a certain field of science in classification of science areas and fields, therefore awarding doctoral degree in social

work is not possible in Lithuania. In 2014 the “Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work” together with the “Lithuanian Association of Social Workers” applied to the Ministry with a proposal to include social work into the official classification of fields of science as a separate field, however, this proposal was not accepted.

The programme tries to attract graduates of university Bachelor’s studies in any study field. Students acquire professional competences during a period of 3 semesters in full-time studies or 4 semesters in part-time studies. After the successful graduation, students receive a Master’s degree of a programme with 90 ECTS credits.

The university itself does not set any limitation for the number of student which can be enrolled for the fee-paying programme. The number of applications since 2010 declined from a high level, similar to the Bachelor’s programme. While 49 students enrolled for the programme in 2011/12, in the academic year 2015/16 there have been only 15 inscriptions.

The full tuition fee amounts to 3174 Euro for the entire time of studies; this equals to 1058 Euro per semester of full-time studies and 793,50 Euro per semester of part-time studies. In comparison with the Bachelor’s programme the drop-out rate is low; only 2 to 3 students of each cohort cancel their studies without a degree.

3.1.2 Objectives and competences

According to the self-evaluation of MRU, the mission of the Master’s degree programme “Social Work”, is to prepare highly qualified graduates of social work who are able to conduct scientific research, critically analyse social issues, according to the changing society context. Graduates shall be able to foresee the risks of uncertain situations, to apply and develop innovative strategies, induce positive changes in the society through reduction of social exclusion and empowering individuals, groups and communities to participate actively in the process of problem solving. Further, they should gain managerial competences, such as organising effectively human, financial and other resources as well as to organise social work process and provision of social services, encourage the development of the infrastructure of social services in order to seek for the most effective problem solving strategies in the national and European context.

The expert group has the opinion that a holistic education is provided for students to enhance their personal integrity and capacity for developing as competent professionals. Besides developing students’ competence as social workers, the programme also aims at providing students with a solid foundation, which is essential for its graduates to advance academically through further studies.

3.1.3 Employability

The expert group got the impression that the demand for professionals in social work on Bachelor as well as on Master level is high in Lithuania. While Bachelor graduates are expected to work in any practical field of social work, the holders of the Master's degree shall be employed in similar institutions, but mainly at management level. Such institutions can be institutions of social security, education, health care and legal institutions, e.g. municipal divisions of social support, social support centres, foster homes, day and community centres, non-governmental organisations, hospitals or prisons. Further, graduates of the Master's programme are able to work as teachers and researchers at universities and colleges, research groups or in the departments of related ministries. Since the last accreditation of the programme, graduates were able to find jobs mostly in the public sector, which is shown by alumni surveys at MRU.

According to the university and representative of the labour market, who were discussion with the expert group during the visit, the demand for qualified specialists on the Lithuanian labour market is still increasing. Therefore, the expert group is convinced that the programme is adequate to meets the growing demand for social work specialists in the Lithuanian system of social services.

3.1.4 Conclusion

The "Social Work" programme's mission statement is derived from and consistent with the institution's mission and the mission of the institute and is appropriate to the purpose of professional social work education at the Master of social work level. The "Social Work" programme's mission statement connects with the university's mission by the inclusion of student knowledge development and advancement, embracing diversity, community partnerships and lifelong learning.

The programme is designed to lay a strong foundation for students in both theories and practice relating to social work, social science knowledge and its application, and to prepare them for entry into a diverse range of social work settings. In order to provide students with a broad and enriched learning experience and to enhance their intellectual and personal development, the programme also includes different required courses in the curriculum.

3.2 Concept of the study programme

3.2.1 Admission criteria and recognition of competences

To be admitted to the Master's degree programme "Social Work", students must have completed a first cycle university studies in social work. If applicants from other Bachelor study programmes apply, they are admitted with the condition to study in two bridge course, namely "Social Work

Theory and Practice” and “Methodology of Social Work”. Each course is calculated with a workload of 6 ECTS credits. Graduates from colleges, who have acquired a non-university degree, have to study in bridge courses for one year, where they acquire 60 ECTS credits.

The expert group understood that the admission requirements shall make sure that students have a minimum of competences, which are necessary to study on a Master’s level. However, the interviews during the on-site visit showed a mismatch between the objectives of the programme and the ability of students to reach them without sufficient knowledge from their Bachelor’s studies. This is why the peers recommend revising the admission requirements. Students should have more than basic competences in social work, since two bridge courses are not enough for studying social work on a Master’s level.

Achievements from other study programmes are recognised in the line with the Lisbon Convention; non-formal and informal learning competences can be assessed and recognised according to an internal procedure of Mykolas Romeris University. Upon request, the university can assess non-formal study achievements and recognise the competences acquired on their basis. At MRU the responsibility for establishing the procedure of the assessment of non-formal study achievements and the recognition of competences is vested in faculties, institutes and departments, while the Academic Affairs Centre is in charge of coordinating the process of the assessment.

From the perspective of the expert group, admission criteria and recognition procedure are transparent, but requirements for applicants from non-social work programmes should be revised.

3.2.2 Structure of the study programme

The Master’s degree study programme “Social Work” has a normal study time of three semesters. During the studies students acquire 90 ECTS credits in compulsory and elective courses. The curriculum contains in the first semester the compulsory components “Methodology of Social Research”, “Social Security Law”, “Strategies for Social Services Provision and Management” and “Theoretical Models of Social Work”. Additional competences are added by the optional courses “Progressive Alternatives for Imprisonment”, “Sociocultural Education of Community” and “Sociology of Migration”, where students have to choose one out of three.

With the second semester students already start with their “Master thesis” and study in the modules “Development and Evaluation of Social Projects”, “Social Policy of European Union”, “Strategies of Sociocultural Work with Different Groups of Youth” and in one of the optional course “E-health and Management of Social Services” or “Institutional System of Social Well-being”.

The third semester is characterised by a practical orientation, where students have to do either some “Social Work Practice in Correctional Institutions”, “Social Work Practice in Migration Services” or “The Practice of Scientific Research in Social Work”. This practical experience is acquired besides finishing the “Master thesis”.

From the perspective of the expert group the curriculum contains reasonable modules, which allow students to deepen competences in social work on a Master's level. The practical orientation is combined with a satisfying level of theoretical as well as methodological skills, which enable students to run their own applied research projects for the Master's thesis.

3.2.3 ECTS and modularisation

Students are required to accumulate 90 ECTS credits for the 3 semester full-time Master's programme, respectively for the 4 semester part-time programme. One ECTS credit equals 27 hours of workload. Credits are assigned based on the expected curricular and extracurricular workload necessary to complete a course. Credits are awarded based on examinations during or at the end of a course. Furthermore, 24 ECTS credits are awarded for a Master's thesis. The module handbook specifies competences to be acquired, teaching methods, formats of examination and number of ECTS credits. With a size of 6 ECTS credits per module, the overall workload during the entire study programme is 2430 hours. From the perspective of the expert group the academic feasibility of the programme is not put into question. However, due to the fact that most of the students have a regular day job to finance their studies, the overall burden for students is rather high. Therefore, many students are enrolled in the part-time study programme to better combine studies, work and family.

3.2.4 Teaching methods and study contexts

The university teachers use different teaching methods, brought into play in lectures and in seminars. The methods comprise role play, team projects, case studies, problem-based learning, discussion and debate, targeted consultations (individual, of group, on-line etc.), or graphical visualisation technique method. Like that teachers implement contemporary teaching methods to empower students with competencies such as taking initiative, creativity, independence, as well as taking responsibility for one's own development, failures and successes. Students learn how to plan and work towards their own development. According to the programme and course syllabi, teachers foster active participation and discussion of the students during course sessions. They encourage creative thinking and problem solving. During practical modules, students have accompanying lectures, seminars, and professional activity in the institution.

The expert group got the impression that a high level of teaching is in place at MRU. Students are able to study in the programme on the basis of a sound concept, which is carried out by motivated teachers in adequate seminars and lectures. The ability to conduct own – mostly applied – research is fostered adequately.

3.2.5 Conclusion

The main goals of the postgraduate programme “Social Work” comply with the mission and the strategy of the university and the objective to provide some benefit for the Lithuanian society. Competencies of the study programme are in the line with the goals of a Master’s level study programme.

Even though the university was not able to establish doctoral programmes in social work, as it was recommended by the previous accreditation, research effort should be strengthened at MRU within the existing structures. The university should especially foster more research in social work and financially support research projects. It is recommended to make use of the recently established research laboratories at MRU and to focus on applied research in the field of social work.

4 Objectives and concepts of study programme “International Politics and Economics” (2nd cycle)

4.1 Objectives of the study programme

4.1.1 Short summary of the study programme

The study programme “International Politics and Economics” (2nd cycle) is one of the new programmes of MRU, being in the line with the international strategy of the university. The Master’s degree programme comprises 3 semester of full-time studies or 4 semesters of part-time studies, leading to a Master’s degree in Political Science with 90 ECTS credits.

The study programme is designed for Bachelor’s degree graduates, who want to deepen their knowledge in the field of international politics and economics and become specialists of the political and economic specifics of the Asian region.

Its qualification objectives reflect the needs of the relevant professional practice in international organisations, internationally active business corporations and other international labour fields, especially in Asia. Representatives from professional practice are involved in the development and implementations of the programme, mainly through their participation in the Study Programme Committee.

The university does not set any limitation for the number of student which can be enrolled for the fee-paying programme, but according to MRU’s regulation, at least 15 students per cycle are needed. In the academic cycles 2013/2014 already 23 students enrolled for the programme, only 17 in the period 2014/15, and 13 students in the admission year 2015/2016. The university aims

to ideally admit and enrol 20 students per academic year. The instream of roughly 27 students per year appears to be fine, but the drop-out rate of 11 to 12 per year is concerning and an indication of improvements to the programme that can be made. It appears that these numbers are explained by prospective students registering on the condition of receiving financial aid and withdrawing when they do not receive it. The full tuition fee amounts to 3360 Euro for the entire programme. This is a total of 1120 Euro per semester of full-time studies and 840 Euro per semester of part-time studies.

4.1.2 Objectives and competences

According to the self-report of the university, the Master's programme "International Politics and Economics" wants to prepare international relations and international economics specialists, who are able to conduct research in the field of international relations and international economic processes. In particular, they shall be able to analyse and research political as well as economic process in Asian regions and countries, as well as forecast the development of politics in Asian countries and critically assess trends of political and economic integration in Asia and Europe and their impact on Lithuania. The focus on Asia covers political and economic issues, which graduates take into consideration theoretically and in practice. Therefore, students will simulate possible consequences of European and Asian politics decisions on issues related to international relations and international economy on the national, regional, and global levels, as well as provide recommendations and proposals on economic and political problems in Asia, Europe, and Lithuania.

In general, the expert group acknowledges the broad perspective of the programme. However, in process of evaluating the programme some questions were raised.

In the first place, it remained not yet decided whether the Master's programme is primarily research-oriented or primarily aims at training for policy advice. Both goals have been stated to the reviewers in the review process in interviews and in the written documentation. Both are potentially valuable, but hard to achieve simultaneously in only one Master's programme in 3 semesters. In any case, the analytical approach and the research focus of the study programme should be strengthened from the perspective of the peers.

Further, it was not sufficiently elucidated, whether the programme wants to focus on Asia or on general International Politics. In the first case, the language courses could be offered/made compulsory throughout the programme and not just for one month. If the programme focuses more on general International Relations, IR-theory should be offered on a much higher level than in the present form which was considered by some graduates as repeating the Bachelor's level. To keep a broad focus in the programme, its design should be adjusted. Students should have the option to choose one out of three different paths (e.g. political economy, Asian studies, or international relations). The major field of study should be mentioned on the graduation certificate and/or on the diploma supplement.

The focus of the programme is also touched by questions concerning the title, since it is doubted that the programme wants to teach "economics" as an academic discipline. If this was the intention, more economics courses would have to be offered. Since the professors clarified that this is not the case, the expert group recommends changing the name of the programme by substituting the term "economics" with "economy".

In regard to the regional orientation of the programme, it could be clarified, whether Russia is considered as an Asian country or Russia is considered regarding its policy towards Asia.

Finally, it might be helpful to sharpen the profile of the programme and to answer the question, whether interdisciplinarity is the primary orientation (political science, law, economics, sociology, history, etc.) or political science is the focus or unique selling point of the programme (thus possibly leading to/qualifying for a PhD later on). In the latter case, the level and number of political science courses could be increased in order to systematically differ from Bachelor levels and prepare for doctoral studies.

4.1.3 Employability

According to MRU graduates are intended to work as specialists, who could be either able to start a business with Asian countries or to be employed in the private sector associated with Asian countries, or be employed in national and international institutions associated with international political and economic areas. Graduates shall be also prepared for positions in the public sector of Lithuania (e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of National Defence) and European Union institutions.

A high percentage of students comes from the public sector, where the employer pays for the fees. The structure of class schedules is made in such a way that it is possible to study while holding down a full-time job, although they require some flexibility from their employers to do so. The Master's degree is considered essential for most decent jobs in the public sector. The expert group is convinced that graduates are able to find positions in all mentioned spheres, even if the ability to work either in a political institution or a business company depend on pre-Master's competences and experiences of students, which are acquired besides studies in the programme.

4.1.4 Conclusion

The Master's programme is aligned with the strategy of the university and the expert group highly appreciates the establishment of the programme at MRU. At the same time, the programme can be further improved within the next year. In the first place, students should be allowed to choose between three directions for deepening their competences and knowledge in either, international relations (in theory and practice), Asia (as area studies), or political economy (including IPE theories).

Since the research-orientation seems to be the preferred primary feature (and not policy advice) by teachers, the programme would gain from more courses on methodology, research design, and on the appropriate use of IR/IPE-theories for the analysis of empirical puzzles. The latter seems to be unclear currently as expressed by teachers and graduates alike in the interview with the expert group.

Since both the study of international relations and any job with international elements require a good command of the English language, much more courses of the Master's programme could be taught in English. This could also constitute a competitive advantage vis-a-vis similar Master's programmes on International Relations of the other Lithuanian universities in Vilnius and Kaunas.

4.2 Concept of the study programme

4.2.1 Admission criteria and recognition of competences

For the inscription in the study programme, applicants have to submit a Bachelor's degree (or its equivalent) in political science or economics from a university and they have to have a sufficient knowledge of the English language (B2 level). In case of Bachelor's degree in another subject than political science or economics, students have to attend three additional courses, which are "Introduction to Political Science", "Modern Political Theories" and "Microeconomics and Macroeconomics" and pass them during the first semester.

In case there are more applicants than available places – which is still not the case for this particular programme –, MRU applies a score based admission procedure. According to the General Admission Requirements two elements make up the competitive score: the mark of the final exams and (or) the final thesis multiplied by 0.8 and the average of all the other marks in the diploma and its annexes. Additional scores to the competitive can be achieved under certain circumstances, e.g. for applicants that hold a MRU leader's diploma.

The programme applies pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the students' "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification. The criteria and the selection procedure for the students' admission are transparent and easy to understand. However, the admission requirements should be revised with the aim to start the programme already in the first semester with a more homogeneous group of student, having a similar level of knowledge. Currently, students start with different expectations and rather heterogeneous competences in political science and economics. The demand for a programme of this nature would appear to be self-regulating, attracting people with an interest in international relations. Although the study advertises economics, some but fewer students chose for this reason. And students did not choose the study's self-professed focus on Asia. This appeared to be a genuine surprise to all students interviewed.

4.2.2 Structure of the study programme

The Master's study programme is structured into three full-time semesters, where students study in compulsory and optional modules.

The first semester covers the mandatory subjects "Contemporary Theories of International Politics and Economic", "International Political Economy", "International Law and International Institutions" and "Scientific Work and Master Thesis". As optional courses students choose either, "Political and National Conflict Studies", "Comparative International Politics", "Comparative Economics and Globalization", or "Security Studies".

The second semesters contains the mandatory subjects "Political and Economic Systems of Asian Countries", "Economic, Political, and Defensive Integration of Europe and Asia", and "Scientific Work and Master Thesis". Two of the following optional modules complement the core courses: "Far Eastern Studies", "Studies of the chosen Country (Russia or China, or South Korea, or Japan) and Language (Russian or Chinese, or Korean", "Russian and CIS Studies", "Middle Eastern Studies".

During the third semester the modules "Lithuanian Politics of Foreign and International Economy" and "Master Thesis" are mandatory. Further, one of the courses "International Practice / Practice" or "Language" is laid down in the curriculum.

The core of the curriculum is international relations, broadly conceived, but with a focus on geopolitics. The economics part of the study is rather small and better described as political economy. Alongside the core, students can then effectively focus on one of three specialisations. This should be made more explicit. The three directions are security, political economy and Asia (or Eurasia).

The university has a mission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to focus on all kinds of countries in Asia outside of Russia, but this is only apparent in talks. The committee found some staff to be more direct and practical in incorporating all countries into the study programme, and more open to making the study more internationally accessible through the increased use of English. The committee explicitly supports this as necessary and desirable components of a quality Master's programme with scientific merit that prepares students for both the world of practice and for doctoral programmes.

The peers also note that the study does few favours to its students by referring to Russia as simply an Asian country. Eurasian appears more appropriate and in line with international science and practice.

4.2.3 ECTS and modularisation

Following the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions on 1 September 2011 moved to a new system for calculating credits.

According to this national regulation 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the workload of the full-time academic year, 30 ECTS credits are normally allocated to one semester. A student is entitled to choose a different volume of part-time studies; however, the total duration of the studies may not be longer than by one and a half times of the usual duration of the full-time studies in the same programme.

The usual volume of each subject is 6 ECTS credits, only the Master's thesis is calculated with 30 ECTS credits. Contact work in the second-cycle and non-degree studies must amount to at least 10 percent of the total study programme, including at least 5 percent of direct participation of the teachers and the students (non-remote contact work). Studies are made up of 90 ECTS credits, 30 ECTS credits per semester.

Since many of the students combine their academic ambitions with job duties the overall workload is high. However, the academic feasibility of the programme is not called into question.

4.2.4 Teaching methods and study contexts

The university teachers use different teaching methods, brought into play in lectures and in seminars. The methods comprise networked learning methods, team projects, case studies, simulations and problem-based learning. Like that teachers implement contemporary teaching methods to empower students with competencies such as taking initiative, creativity, independence, as well as taking responsibility for one's own development, failures and successes. Students learn how to plan and work towards their own development.

Students for the most part appeared to be enthusiastic about the flexibility of the supervisors and teachers and happy with the way they were responded to student initiatives on research papers. They mentioned, however, that a good amount of the study material was repetition of what they learned in Bachelor education. A strong recommendation of the committee is therefore, to move toward key journal articles in the field that ensure students are grappling with the theoretical state of the art. It also became apparent that the programme would benefit from more attention to the methods of theory development and qualitative testing, beyond what is received in the common courses with other programmes. There was great uncertainty on what was best to translate theoretical knowledge into useful parts of research.

4.2.5 Conclusion

The mandatory course content is in general appropriate to achieve some stated objectives of the programme. However, these objectives should be specified and streamlined to clarify and make more transparent, which orientation the programme has. The teaching tools are suitable and students greatly benefit from the practical experience of the faculty teaching team and external professionals.

The above mentioned recommendations to revise the title of the programme, to adjust the design of the curriculum and to tighten admission requirements, might help to improve the programme and to run it successfully in a competitive environment.

5 Implementation

With the following statements the expert group evaluates, whether necessary resources exist and organisational requirements are met to run study programmes. It is assessed whether resources are used consistently and purposefully to implement the concepts of the presented programmes. The following general remarks are valid for all programmes to be accredited. General statements are supplemented by specific findings where necessary. Through consistent, dependable, and adequate funding, the university provides the personnel, resources, and facilities to support the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programmes and services.

5.1 Resources

5.1.1 Personal resources

At five faculties and one school with more than 30 departments at MRU around 1.300 staff members are employed, among them more than 900 academic staff members. Many teachers are not employed exclusively as full-time teachers at MRU and are engaged at other universities and in professional fields as well. In regard to the assessed study programmes, the expert group comes to the conclusion that quantitative capacities are sufficient.

Social Work

The “Social Work” programmes are run at the Faculty of Social Welfare, with its institutes. The “Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work” being in charge of the study programmes, comprises 12 professors, 16 associate professors and 24 lecturers. The faculty is adequate in numbers and highly qualified. Many of the staff members hold, in parallel to their academic position are working as practising social workers. Ad hoc instruction is provided by a cadre of excellent practitioners; the programme has an effective system for assigning, evaluating, and retaining or, when necessary, releasing ad hoc instructors. The development of relevant expertise is reinforced by the practical experience of the faculty teaching on the programme.

International Politics and Economics

The Faculty of Politics and Management comprises four institutes: “Institute of Management”, “Institute of Public Administration”, “Institute of Philosophy and Humanities”, and “Institute of Political sciences”. The Institute of Political sciences, which runs the study programme “International Politics and Economics”, offers its expertise in various fields of international politics, defence

politics or political theory. In education and research 8 professors, 13 associate professors, 15 lecturers, 1 assistant and 6 doctoral students are involved. The number of staff appears appropriate. There is a significant reliance on outside teachers from other countries on an ad hoc and temporary basis. Only the match of research output and focus of studies (research-teaching link) is not always clear to the expert group.

General provisions

The Personal office organises the employment of the teaching staff. The teaching load in the programmes is planned in the end of the academic year. The workload of teachers in the assessed study programmes consists of lectures, seminars, training exercises, advisory hours face to face or on-line, via Moodle system, reviewing, assessment of final thesis, work in the qualification commission for the defence of final thesis and other tasks at the university.

All staff members are admitted to their positions by public tender competitions and promoted by the rector, following proposals of the recruitment commission, after an evaluation of employees' qualifications which is carried out using established criteria. Salaries of the staff consist of a fixed component and a variable component, which is calculated by use of defined criteria including mostly involvement in research, designing new study programmes, creating joint programmes. There are courses for teachers to improve their didactical competences; the attendance is voluntarily, but if a staff member does not take part, there will be no promotion at the university.

5.1.2 Financial Resources

Mykolas Romeris University is a public university, which receives money from the Lithuanian state and tuition fees of students. However, in contrast to the majority of other universities of Lithuania MRU receives about 75 percent of its income not from the state budget, but from its own earnings via provided services or implementing projects which were won in the tenders. MRU looks for additional sources of funding through active participation in national, regional and international research programmes and projects. At present the state budget, EU Structural Funds, the Research Council of Lithuania, international mobility programmes and projects and the tuition fees are the main sources of income.

Following legal provisions, MRU allocates all the funds to the implementation of its main functions, this is the activity of studies and research and its administration, as well as on the support of infrastructure. As prescribed by the statute, annual income and expenditure estimates, their amendments and implementation reports are approved by the Council of MRU. Estimates and reports are subject to analysis in the Rectorate and Senate before they are submitted to the Council.

According to the self-report, MRU has a remuneration system oriented towards strategic MRU priorities and achieved results. Remuneration for teachers is allocated based on transparent and

impartial system for specific works performed in line with the university's strategic development directions. Clear criteria create a possibility for teachers to plan work according to their interests and to plan their remuneration. International EUA experts evaluated this remuneration system as a progressive and innovative one. The new remuneration system played a very important role in activating teacher activity in priority areas of MRU activity – development of study programmes, remote and electronic studies, and scientific publications.

Increased core funding appears to be a requirement for programmes in general at MRU. It also appears unclear how and how much of the tuition money earned through the study fees is allocated to the departments and/or chairs delivering the programme. Therefore, greater transparency of financing and distribution and overhead formulas might be motivating for researchers.

5.1.3 Infrastructural Resources

Mykolas Romeris University is a modern and dynamic European university with a creative and efficient research and academic community. From the fall of 2015, the Social Innovations Laboratory network, MRU LAB, has been established. It unites 19 research laboratories on campus and is open for researchers collaborating in different fields, such as Environmental Management, Intellectual Property, Digital and Creative Industry, Social Technology or Business Innovation.

Considering the number of students of the study programmes, the material infrastructure is sufficient. MRU has in place all necessary technical conditions for high quality implementation of the educational process, which includes academic and support facilities, gyms, the university's administration quarters, the main library, a reading hall, a conference hall, resource centres and other auxiliary facilities. The facilities are supplied with all necessary technical equipment, which provides means for implementing the academic process at a high level and creating high-quality social conditions for students, teachers and employees of the university.

The expert group finds that for the implementation of the programmes contemporary material and classroom facilities are available. Moot courts are used in every subject; speeches are analysed in courses. Currently students and employees at MRU use more than 1,300 stationary and mobile computer work places.

Besides technical equipment, the library of MRU is a crucial factor for all study programmes. The resources of the central library are sufficient in all subjects. Searching and delivery of books and articles is organised in a pleasant way. Students also have access to online bibliographical and full text databases and the online electronic library systems. It is remarkable that the library has 24/7 opening hours and provides enough work space for students. It should be especially noted that the library provides equipment for students with special needs, such as computers for blind student and Braille printers.

5.2 Organisation, counselling and cooperation

Organisation

Responsibilities and contact of the individual programmes are clearly defined. The decision-making processes within MRU are well documented. Regarding the university structure MRU follows the law on higher education which states: “a state university must have the collegial management bodies — the council and the senate, as well as a sole management body — the rector”. The expert group finds that the necessary bodies and institutional requirements are in place. Further, the group takes note of the fact that Mykolas Romeris has been successfully evaluated in procedures of institutional accreditation by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and the European University Association (EUA).

The decision making procedure in regard to study programmes is well organised and documented. In compliance with the “Mykolas Romeris University Studies Procedure” a Study Programme Development Working Group develops a study programme. As a second step a Study Programme Committee updates the programme, its implementation and quality. Both bodies involve social partners and student representatives. The Chairperson of the Study Programme Committee is approved by the Senate on Rector's recommendation. The Study Programme Development Working Group and the Study Programme Committee are approved by the Faculty Dean or Institute Director.

Counselling

The programme management, teachers and support staff provide personal counselling and advice to students and faculty members where necessary in respect to their studies, academic issues and organisational issues. Applicants and students are substantially supported in regards to visa requirements, since many of the students at MRU come from abroad, e.g. Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia or other non-EU-states.

Cooperation

MRU has a cooperative approach to networking with other HEIs, research institutes and representatives from business and administration. Cooperation particularly exists with social partners and national as well as foreign universities in different ways. MRU is also well integrated in the education system of Lithuania and the academic community. Thy university runs several well implemented joint programmes with foreign universities. The study programmes “Social Work” (Bachelor and Master) and “International Politics and Economics” have no joint programme cooperation, but intense cooperation with social partners from the social work field, respectively government bodies and other political institutions.

5.3 Examination system

Mykolas Romeris University has implemented its own methodology for conducting continuous and final assessments. A system of cumulative grades is used to assess the academic subject study achievements. The final assessment of the academic subject study achievements is based on calculations provided in the programme of a relevant subject. In separate cases knowledge checks can be conducted after an academic subject or a module is delivered. Subject to a permission of the Faculty Dean/Institute Director, the assessment of achievements may take place before the end of a semester. The timetables of the examinations and other knowledge checks are drafted and published at least two weeks before the end-of-semester examinations. A scoring system is used to assess study achievements. A ten-point grading scale is used to assess the knowledge of the university students. The lowest positive grade is 5. In the course of studies and the assessment of the study outcomes, the students and teachers must comply with the rules of the Code of Ethics of the University. For violation of the principle of fair competition, cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in connection with the assessment of study achievements, the student is expelled from the university on the basis of a serious breach of academic ethics. Other principles and the procedure for the assessment of study outcomes are established in the Procedure for Assessing Study Achievements. The opportunity for repeating exams exists. The experts assess the test frequency and organisation as adequate and appropriate load.

Students' final assessment consists of interim assessment and examination. The final examination makes up 40 to 50 percent of the final grade for the course. The interim grade follows a cumulative point system (grades out of 10), which includes an assessment of various types of coursework (theoretical knowledge test, presentation, written essay, colloquium, etc.). The final examinations are designed to test skills, generic and subject specific knowledge, and include essay questions, hypothetical/practical case, knowledge test, etc. The passing grade is 5/10.

The academic feasibility of the programmes is guaranteed by a suitable curriculum design and appropriate testing organisation. Overall, the test system is appropriate. Examination procedures are suitable in quantity and frequency. The tests are module-related and knowledge- and skills-oriented.

5.4 Documentation and transparency

A complete package of documents, which regulate the assessment of knowledge and competencies of school leavers and students (information on study programmes, requirements for applicants, information on academic process, requirements for evaluation of knowledge and competencies of students, special regulations and requirements for evaluation of knowledge and competencies, rules of qualification recognition), is developed and approved by the university. All information and documents are published and available in Lithuanian and many of them also in English for students and prospective students.

All necessary data for the admission procedure are transparent, well documented, and accessible to students and to the public. The same is true for regulations on exams and the recognition of competences according to the Lisbon Convention and the recognition of professional competences. Required legal documents such as final grade certificates, Transcript of Records and Diploma Supplement are contained in the self-report on the study programmes.

5.5 Gender justice and compensation opportunities for disabled people

Gender equality and equal opportunities are provided for students who are in difficult life situations, in particular, students with children, foreign students, students with health problems, students from among migrants and / or students from the so-called uneducated strata of population. In the implementation of study programmes MRU guarantees equal opportunities in all of the following situations: admission to the programmes; granting of scholarships or loans; design and approval of educational programmes; evaluation of students' academic achievements. The university facilities have a universal design and provide barrier-free access in all visited buildings.

5.6 Conclusion

At MRU all requirements for the successful implementation of the study programmes are met. For the realisation of the programmes adequate personal resources as well as an organisational and administrative framework, including a suitable examination system, is in place. Necessary documents are available and decision-making processes are transparent.

6 Quality Management

The university has established a quality assurance system on the central level and on the faculties' level as well. There are study programme committees for all study programmes at MRU, comprising different stakeholders such as teachers, students, external social partners and alumni. The committees are responsible for content and structure of one or more study programmes.

One of the strong points of an effective quality management system is the implemented principle of continuous enhancement. The results of quality monitoring of programmes reveal weaknesses and allow developing measures for overcoming possible problem situations and preventing students from negative learning experience. The outcomes of the internal quality evaluation are taken into account in the processes of developing curricula and selecting personnel.

Evaluations

The university organises evaluations in each semester. Students are invited to give their feedback by filling out an online questionnaire before getting access to their grades in a particular course.

The students can decide if they want to take part in the evaluation or to skip and continue to go on to their results. One questionnaire focusses on overall aspects and another one focusses on aspects related to the specific course. The students' opinion evaluates the teachers' work which covers e.g. their internationalisation or use of Moodle and is one part of the basis for the performance related pay component of the salary. The other part is the assessment of their research work. The evaluation results can be reviewed by the teacher, the deans and the vice-rector for quality assurance. The programme leaders are responsible to give feedback to students about the results of the evaluation. It arises that there is still a lack in this feedback procedure, since not all programme leaders give feedback to the students. So in 2015 the central quality centre of the university started to give oral feedbacks to students. However, the peer group recommends that the university should regularly provide feedback on the results of surveys to the students. Also students of Masters' programmes should be informed about measures, which are taken by the university to react on students' evaluations.

Teaching performance and staff development

Lecturers are stimulated by the assessment they receive and the related benefits. In addition, opportunities for continuous improvement and maintenance of their qualification are provided. The university offers courses to improve professors and teachers didactical competences. The attendance is voluntarily. But if someone does not take part the consequence will be that the person cannot receive a doctor's degree. Furthermore the requirements for new staff members at MRU are high and they have to show good teaching competences.

Quality of Study Programmes

Study programmes are initiated by the faculties. First a proposal will be discussed in the faculty board. If there is a positive decision about it, the proposal is forwarded to the Centre of Academic Affairs. The Marketing Centre of the university evaluates whether the proposed study programme has a sufficient market potential and is not competing with other programmes of the university. The rectorate discusses the proposal and decides if the university will establish the study programme. All of the study programmes have to comply with legal regulations such as the number of given ECTS and study regulations as well. National regulations do not yet exist for all programmes. The quality of study programmes is continuously observed by programme committees. Finally, the quality management system is fully functional and it gathers all the relevant information through evaluation procedures and data analysis.

7 Summary

The programmes "Social Work" (1st cycle), "Social Work" (2nd cycle) and "International Politics and Economics" (2nd cycle) have been assessed on the basis of the "Standards and Guidelines for

Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG). The reviewers come to the conclusion that the standards 1.1 (Policy for quality assurance), 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes), 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment), 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification), 1.5 (Teaching staff), 1.6 (Learning resources and student support), 1.7 (Information management), 1.8 (Public information), 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and 1.10 (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

8 Recommendation of the expert group

The group of experts recommends the following **decision**: Accreditation without conditions.

IV Decision of the ACQUIN Accreditation Commission

On the basis of the report of the expert group, the statement of the HEI and the statement of the standing expert committee, on 31/03/2016 the Accreditation Commission takes the following decision:

According to the order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania „On the approval of the Description of the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes” (as of July 29 2011), the assessed study programmes are evaluated against the standards mentioned in annex 1 and 2 of the order.

The programmes “Social Work” (1st cycle), “Social Work” (2nd cycle) and “International Politics and Economics” (2nd cycle) have been evaluated positively.¹

1 General recommendation

- After conducting course evaluations, the university should regularly provide some feedback on the results of surveys to students. Students should be informed about measures, which are taken by the university to react on students’ evaluations.

2 Social Work (I cycle)

No.	Evaluation area	Evaluation of the area
1	Aims of the programme and intended learning outcomes	4
2	Curriculum design	3
3	Teaching staff	3
4	Facilities and learning resources	4
5	Study process and students’ performance assessment (student selection, performance assessment, support)	3
6	Management of the programme (administration of the programme, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	20

¹ According to the ministerial order, study programmes shall be evaluated positively if the evaluation score in the external evaluation report of ACQUIN is no less than 12 and not a single area has been evaluated as ‘negative’ (in accordance with the evaluation areas defined in Annex 1 and Annex 2 to the Description and the grading scale). Positively evaluated programmes with a score of no less than 12 should be accredited for a period of 3 years; programmes with a score of no less than 18 should receive the accreditation for 6 years.

The study programme „Social Work“ (I cycle) is accredited without any conditions.

The accreditation is limited until 30th September 2022.

Additional recommendation:

- Ethical aspects, values and professional behaviour in the field of social work should be stronger pronounced in the curriculum.

3 Social Work (II cycle)

No.	Evaluation area	Evaluation of the area
1	Aims of the programme and intended learning outcomes	3
2	Curriculum design	3
3	Teaching staff	3
4	Facilities and learning resources	4
5	Study process and students' performance assessment (student selection, performance assessment, support)	3
6	Management of the programme (administration of the programme, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	19

The study programme „Social Work“ (II cycle) is accredited without any conditions.

The accreditation is limited until 30th September 2022.

Additional recommendations:

- The admission requirements should be revised. Students should have more than basic knowledge in social work.
- The university should foster more research in social work and financially support research projects. It is recommended to make use of the recently established research laboratories at MRU and to focus on applied research in the field of social work.

4 International Politics and Economics (II cycle)

No.	Evaluation area	Evaluation of the area
1	Aims of the programme and intended learning outcomes	3

2	Curriculum design	3
3	Teaching staff	3
4	Facilities and learning resources	4
5	Study process and students' performance assessment (student selection, performance assessment, support)	3
6	Management of the programme (administration of the programme, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	19

The study programme „International Politics and Economics“ (II cycle) is accredited without any conditions.

The accreditation is limited until 30th September 2022.

Additional recommendations:

- The university should rename the study programme, since one part of the title – “economics” – might be misleading as long as the programme has a strong focus on political science. An alternative title could comprise “political economy”.
- The design of the programme should be adjusted. Students should have the option to choose one out of three different paths (e.g. political economy, Asian studies, or international relations). The major field of study should be mentioned on the graduation certificate and/or on the diploma supplement.
- The admission requirements should be revised with the aim to start the programme already in the first semester with a more homogeneous group of student, having a similar level of knowledge.
- The analytical approach and the research focus of the study programme should be strengthened.