



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus kolegijos

ŽELDYNŲ IR JŲ DIZAINO PROGRAMOS (653H93001)

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *LANDSCAPE GARDENING AND DESIGN*
STUDY PROGRAMME
(653H93001)**

at Vilnius College

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
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Vilnius
2012

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Želdynai ir jų dizainas</i>
Valstybinis kodas	653H93001
Studijų sritis	Technologijos mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Inžinerija
Studijų programos rūšis	Koleginės
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (3), Iššęstinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	180
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Kraštovaizdžio projektavimo profesinis bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2001-08-31, Nr. 1254; perreg. 2002-06-26, Nr. 1190

INFORMATION ON ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Landscape Gardening and Design</i>
State code	653H93001
Study area	Technological sciences
Study field	Engineering
Kind of the study programme	College studies
Level of studies	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (3), Part-time (4)
Scope of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor of Landscape Design
Date of registration of the study programme	31-08-2001, No.1254; re-reg. 26-06-2002, No. 1190

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

“The mission of Kolegija is to prepare practice focused specialists with higher professional education in physical, technological, social, biomedical, art spheres and the humanities in order to meet the economic and social needs of Vilnius region and the whole of Lithuania; guarantee a modern study process which will correspond the requirements of European higher education area while efficiently cooperating with representatives of the active world; develop students’ abilities and human values which are essential for the Kolegija graduates’ professional activities and successful continuous learning” (SER, p 3). This is the priority objective at Vilnius College and was also the general orientation for the redesign of the curriculum of the study programme “Landscape Gardening and Design” in 2011. Not later than 2014 it is foreseen to prepare the study programme Landscape Gardening and Design also in a foreign language and accordingly to design interdisciplinary modules in foreign languages.

The study programme is largely practically oriented and targeted to the specific labour market in Lithuania: *“The purpose of the study programme Landscape Gardening and Design is to prepare professional bachelors in landscape design which closely relates with the mission of Vilnius Kolegija to prepare technology field specialists with higher professional education and practical skills to satisfy economic and social needs of Vilnius region and the whole of Lithuania”* (SER, p 6).

The following programme analysis is based on the self-evaluation-report (SER) „*Engineering study field / Study programme of Landscape Design branch / Landscape Gardening and Design*“ (March 2012) on the one hand and the visit of the international expert group at Vilnius College on the 9th November 2012 on the other hand. During this visit meetings with the administration staff, the staff responsible for the SER, the teaching staff, students’ representatives, alumni and employers provided a good opportunity for a critical analysis of the specifications of the study programme “*Landscape Gardening and Design*” and the SER-declarations. Subsidiary the experts’ survey on training labs and classrooms, equipment, teaching tools and demonstration equipment; methodological and other teaching materials in the classrooms, laboratories, the library, the new built plantation and small landscape architecture laboratory and the renovated building of landscape maintenance department field laboratory, greeneries, the plants’ growing grounds and the ornamental plants’ nursery were a good base for the evaluation of the study programme. Of prime importance for the evaluation of the study programme in general and the reached level of learning outcomes in particular was a survey of the students’ course and final papers (thesis).

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes are convincing and well-defined oriented to the general objective targets of education at Vilnius College. They are not only targeted at the current demands of the employment market in Lithuania, but also at prospective developments related to the relevance of landscape design and landscape gardening in Lithuania.

The achievement of these objectives is evidenced by a high quality of the students' final projects. Beside detailed information in Lithuanian language there exist shortcuts concerning the programme aims in English language on the homepage of Vilnius College.

During the redesign of the curriculum of the study programme "*Landscape Gardening and Design*" in 2011 the creative aspects of the study programme were gradually enhanced, landscape design and floristic design gained importance. Nevertheless, there is also a strong focus on a practice-oriented education in landscape gardening and garden maintenance.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are primarily based on professional requirements, public needs and notably the actual and expected needs of the labour market in Lithuania. It is a special feature of the study programme that there is a distinct focus also on the design of urban open spaces and urban green areas, a field of activity which will presumably become more important during the next years in Lithuania. It has to be mentioned that the demand of landscape designers is at the moment still decreasing because of recession of construction works during the last years caused by the economic crisis in Lithuania. But nevertheless the demand for design specialists of high qualification still exists.

It had to be critically analysed, whether or not it is possible to offer a high level academic education in landscape gardening and landscape design during a single study programme, lasting only three years (full-time studies for bachelor) or four years, respectively (part-time studies). Particularly a high number of top high-class students' courses and final papers indicate that it is not impossible to achieve these ambitious objectives.

The name of the programme Landscape Gardening and Design expresses a current coequal education in landscape gardening on the one hand and landscape design on the other hand. It is important to indicate that the study programme offers opportunities of specialisation (specialisation modules) beginning with the 5th semester either on the landscape design sector or on nursery and garden business.

2. Curriculum design

As documented in the SER the curriculum is based on relevant legal requirements.

The different study modules are in principle spread evenly and are not repetitive, although the education on landscape architecture (20 credits / two semesters) seems to be slightly underrepresented in the curriculum.

It has to be accentuated that the scope of the program is obviously sufficient to ensure high quality learning outcomes in general and a high-class education on the field of landscape design in particular.

Nevertheless it has to be mentioned, that the description of some study modules or topics (at least in its English translation) is partly non-distinctive.

For example the topic “Constructions of environment management building and equipment” of the module “Basics of environment maintenance construction and economics” is vaguely described at present. Also a statement on particulars concerning the topics “Engineering planning, research, operation of urban areas” and “Agricultural territories engineering planning, research, operation” of the module “Environmental Engineering” would be helpful.

Topics of practical work as “Shrub trimming, pruning and grafting”, “Decorative flowers in home balconies and their combinations”, “Plants preparation for winter” and “Non – formal bouquets and compositions” included in the module “Communication” rather should be included into other modules of the study programme.

The lectures about work safety (modules “Small plantation architecture’s construction and building” and “Plantation maintenance”) are at the moment underrepresented, whereas the lectures about the use of individual protective tools and radiation monitoring devices are potentially dispensable.

Nevertheless the content of subjects or modules is mainly consistent with the type and level of the studies.

With the exception that the education on landscape architecture is obviously slightly underrepresented in the curriculum the content and methods of the modules seem to be appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In particular the quality of the final papers (thesis) show, that the content and methods of the subjects and modules are suitable to achieve the ambitious objectives of the study programme in spite of some inconsistencies concerning the design of the modules and subjects of the curriculum.

The content of the programme primarily reflects obvious demands of the employment market in Lithuania. Generally there is the intention to reflect the latest achievements in science, art and technologies, as it was shown during the visit to Vilnius College and is expressed also by the

scientific publications of several staff-members. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned, that in the moment there is no reference to plant propagation *in vitro* in the topic “Propagation of woody plants” of the module “Nursery – garden business”. This up to date method of propagation should also be observed in education as well as scientific research.

In spite of the fact that the quality of the programme was regarded as high by the expert group, there are yet possibilities for a further improvement of the programme:

- The number of design lessons should be increased
- Lessons in nursery could be decreased
- The number of lessons in material sciences should be increased
- A stronger focus should be laid on communication skills
- The education in garden and green space maintenance as well as in dendrology should be strengthened
- A challenging as well as promising focus for future could be “restoration of historical gardens/parks”

3. Staff

The legal requirements that at least three lecturers must have a master’s degree complying with the field of studies of the relevant programme and that at least two lecturers must have at least three years of practical activity experience in the relevant field acquired or renewed not earlier than five years prior to that are fulfilled.

The study programme Landscape Gardening and Design is being implemented by 5 general college studies’ and 14 study field modules’ teachers. 9 study field module teachers work-full time and 5 teachers work part-time. All the teachers implementing the programme hold a Master’s or an equivalent degree. 5 teachers hold a doctorate degree. They are specialists-practitioners or university teachers. 11 teachers belong to the Landscape Maintenance Department which is in charge of the programme. As documented in SER 73 per cent of the teachers have practical activity experience of more than 5 years.

Also the legal requirements that at least 20 per cent of the scope of the field of study academic discipline basics must be taught by lecturers having an academic degree that in the course of the previous three years worked at least 128 class work hours per year and published at least one scientific or methodological work in the course of that time are fulfilled. The achievement of these objectives in general and the multifarious research activities of the teachers of Vilnius College are well documented in the SER.

The qualification of the teaching staff is in any case adequate to ensure learning outcomes.

Nearly all teachers actively participate in scientific research and some are involved in different European Union exchange programmes.

Because of the nearly stable student figures the number of the teaching staff seems to be just sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. Also the teaching staff turnover should not essentially affect the teaching and research activities. More than half of the academic personnel at the moment are younger than 50 years, and more than half of them are associated professors.

Nevertheless, it should be an objective to increase the number of full-time lecturers during the next years. It has to be mentioned that the workload in terms of contact hours seems to be too high at the moment, especially for associate professors.

The higher education institution partly creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme.

An analysis of the teachers' qualification improvement in the period 2006 - 2011 documents that most of the academic staff participated in special courses, international workshops and internships, e.g. in Scotland, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Italy, but the extent of these activities should be enhanced. A clear strategy for the future and additional incentives could be an adequate approach to improve the staff's international mobility.

The teaching staff of the programme is involved in research directly related to the study programme, which is documented by the publication activities of the teaching staff and inter alia congress presentations.

Research activities and the fields of interest of the teaching staff are widely spread and include the evaluation of ornamental plants, phytopathology, environmental management, education, plant protection etc. A research group has been created to coordinate and develop the applied research area. Although in the years 2006 – 2011 teachers published 21 scientific reports in journals and 75 reports were presented at conferences, but not all lecturers are involved in research activities up to now.

It has to be mentioned that it is important concerning the qualification of the staff that the college pays PhD studies to lecturers and that associate teacher may decrease their contact hours if they are involved in research activities (40-60h/year).

In this context and also related to the ongoing internationalisation of the study programme the knowledge of English language of the teachers should be improved.

Due to the strong focus on a high class design education offered at Vilnius College the number of full-time positions in landscape design respectively landscape architecture should be increased.

It has to be noted that also social partners (former graduates) are regularly invited to give lectures at Vilnius College. The good relationship between the College on the one hand and

stakeholders, companies and alumni on the other hand seems to be a main strength of the study programme and enhances the focus of education and research on the demands of the specific labour market in Lithuania.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Referred to the detailed declarations in the SER and the experiences during the visit to Vilnius College the premises for studies are mostly adequate both in their size and quality.

Laboratory and computer equipment seems to be adequate, but offers ongoing possibilities for further improvement. In 2011 (2010) there were 17.7 (17.2) computers for 100 full-time study students. In 2011 35 new computers were acquired. WLAN is available everywhere on the campus. But library resources are only accessible at the library computer.

As a result of the project *“Modernisation of Practical Training and Research Infrastructure in Landscape Maintenance Study Field” (VP3-2.2-ŠMM-14-V)* a “Plantation and Small Landscape Architecture Laboratory” was recently established and the building of “Landscape Maintenance Department field laboratory” was renovated. Also design, ornamental plants, engineering graphics and computer design classrooms have been renovated and offer excellent conditions for teaching and learning.

Two greeneries and container plants’ growing grounds have been built for practical training and the nursery infrastructure was newly arranged. Also there are still deficits concerning the tools used for practical work on the sector of garden engineering and maintenance, the infrastructure of Vilnius College offers a very good base for practical training.

The higher education institution has adequate arrangements for students’ practice. There is an intensive cooperation between the teachers of the department with various stakeholders. Up to now 19 cooperation agreements with stakeholders and collaboration contracts with landscape maintenance companies for the execution of the students’ professional practices have been signed. The professional practices are accompanied and monitored by competent lecturers.

There are also a centralized library at Vilnius College and 8 faculty libraries offering essential literature and publications with an increasing number of titles and periodicals in foreign languages, especially in English.

The infrastructure of the recently established or renovated buildings at the Campus (“Plantation and Small Landscape Architecture Laboratory”, “Landscape Maintenance Department field laboratory”) and also the geodesy laboratory meets modern standards.

A new biology laboratory with modern equipment (trinocular microscope, stereo microscope, student microscopes, laboratory tables, germination boxes, seed counter, a set for soil samples

etc) will be realized soon, but also the existing laboratory infrastructure visited by the expert group is suited for practical teaching.

AutoCAD licenses, Google SketchUp and other essential legal software is available for students' practice not only in the IT rooms, but also for individual use at home or at the dormitory. WLAN-access is available at Vilnius College for the students for free.

The students interviewed by the expert group confirmed that there is an adequate stock of easily accessible teaching materials (teaching/learning materials in the classrooms, descriptions of laboratory works, theodolits etc).

The expert team gained the impression that Vilnius College uses its resources efficiently.

Nevertheless it has to be mentioned, that there is no adequate provision for the special needs of disabled people at Vilnius College up to now.

5. Study process and student assessment

As documented in the SER the admission requirements are well-founded and regulated by legal standards: *“Student enrolment rules to Vilnius Kolegija in 2011 were drawn up in accordance with the Act of Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the Top best 2011 procedure description of the Minister of Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania, general provisions of the common admission of 2011 to the first cycle and integrated studies of Lithuanian higher schools (further – Common admission rules) and Vilnius Kolegija Academic Council resolutions”* (SER, p 21).

Lithuanian school-leavers have a good chance to receive all relevant information about the study programme via different forms of presentation organized by the Vilnius College study service, the career centre and the public relations department in collaboration with various stakeholders: open days at the faculty, exhibitions in various regions of Lithuania, visits to educational institutions, high school students' tours to the faculty, TV reports etc.

Students and alumni confirmed that the organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes and that there are also possibilities to participate in artistic and applied research activities.

Students have also opportunities to participate in mobility programs, but as documented in the SER only few students utilize these opportunities (ERASMUS studies / ERASMUS practice). During the last 6 years 12 students chose Erasmus practice and 9 students - Erasmus studies. Students visited Turkey, Portugal and Slovak Republic. Information about ERASMUS-programme is offered on the College's webpage. Unfortunately, there were no incoming ERASMUS-students in the years 2006 - 2011.

There are efforts to improve student's mobility by offering lectures in English language beginning not later than 2014.

Referred to the detailed declarations in the SER the higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. Considering the study results and other academic achievements, the students may be paid incentive grants.

It was confirmed by the students, that most of them are paid grants. There is an offer to the students to take part in wide spread sport and cultural activities at Vilnius College.

“Vilnius Kolegija learning outcomes assessment procedure (Academic Council session resolution No. ATN – 6 of 5th May 2011)” regulates the module learning outcomes assessment principles and procedure. The assessment system of students' performance seems to be clear and adequate. Cumulative assessment is applied. Each module description has a knowledge, skills and attitudes level calculation formula which indicates the influence of each theoretical and practical module component and self-study task weightings (rate or percentage) on the final mark. Module interim and final evaluation results are announced within in 5 days, excluding the exam day. That ensures clarity and publicity.

The graduates of *Landscape Gardening and Design* study programme adapt well in the job market, as it was confirmed by both alumni and employers.

Referring to the SER the employability rate of the study programme *Landscape Gardening and Design* is quite high and fluctuates reportedly from 80.44 to 97.83%. These figures are apparently wrong because they are based only on the registered graduates in the job exchange.

The factual employability rate should - based on research of the experts' team - actually lie between 50 - 60%.

The evaluation process of teachers and their lessons by students on a regular basis – including the publication of the results – has to be improved.

6. Programme management

Responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated and documented in detail in the SER.

The Study Programme Committee analyses information about the shortcomings of the study programme and its implementation difficulties. Students are incorporated into Academic Council, Faculty council, Curriculum committee activities, and various working groups.

Student Representative Office and the study divisions investigate the students' opinion about the study programme, the quality of the organization of studies, students' expectations, attitudes, needs, values, drop-out reasons and analyze them.

It is intended to develop the feedback system of the study programme implementation and strengthen the interaction between teachers and students as well as carrying out the research on study quality and administration.

Based on the meetings with the staff, students and alumni there seem to be yet deficits concerning the practical implementation of the objectives mentioned above.

The study programme is related to the labour market in Lithuania in a great extent.

“The teachers of the department cooperate with the stakeholders, 19 cooperation agreements have been signed” (SER, p 17).

Companies and stakeholders have a high responsibility for the quality of the education because they are responsible for offering practices for the students, supervised by the teachers.

“In 2006-2008 Kolegija carried out the EU project “Quality Assurance System Development at Vilnius Kolegija”. A quality manual was prepared which described the quality policy, the quality management system, responsibility for the quality management system, the main processes and their hosts' and participants' responsibility matrix (...). The descriptions of the processes were prepared following the requirements of the standard ISO 9001:2008 of the quality management system (QMS). Kolegija operates an internal quality assurance system in accordance with the established and evolving quality management model and integration of Total Quality Management, EFQM, Benchmarking and ISO 9001 quality management principles” (SER, p 29).

At the moment the internal quality assurance system has not yet been established completely. As reported in the SER it is expected to improve the internal quality assurance procedure of the study programmes at Vilnius College as soon as possible.

Concerning the communication between the college's administrations on the one hand and the lecturers on the other hand there seem to be yet potentials for improvement.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. According to the high level and ambitious objectives concerning the education in landscape design, the number of design lessons (landscape architecture) should be increased within the curriculum. The focus on the design and maintenance of urban green spaces as well as on dendrology should be strengthened. Also we suggest increasing the number of lessons in material sciences.

On the other hand it should be considered to decrease the number of lessons in nursery.

2. The number of full-time lecturers should be increased.
3. The international mobility of the staff should be promoted by additional incentives.
4. The continuous communication between the administration staff on the one hand and the lecturers on the other hand has to be gradually improved.
5. The efforts to offer lectures in English language starting not later than 2014 have to be intensified.
6. The virtual-learning possibilities have to be expanded.
7. A stronger focus should be laid on the education and training of communication skills
8. The attempts to support students' mobility (within ERASMUS programme etc.) should be intensified.
9. The high-grade objectives concerning the internal quality assurance system should be effectively realized.
10. The successful project "Modernisation of Practical Training and Research Infrastructure in Landscape Maintenance Study Field" (VP3-2.2-ŠMM-14-V) should be continued. Deficits concerning the tools used for practical work on the sector of garden engineering and maintenance should be eliminated as soon as possible.
11. A challenging as well as promising focus for the future could be "restoration of historical gardens/parks".

IV. SUMMARY

The study programme Landscape Gardening and Design at Vilnius College offers a high-quality education in landscape design as well as in landscape gardening.

The design of the curriculum matches not only the demands of the labour market, but reflects also expected developments of the occupational area.

The staff is highly qualified and is able to motivate the students to presentable results, documented by a good quality of a high number of final thesis.

There were substantial improvements concerning the material infrastructure realized during the last years. Vilnius College offers comparatively very good conditions for studying as well as for applied research.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to improve the internationalization of the study programme, to support the students' and staff's mobility by additional incentives, to increase the number of full-time lecturers, to strengthen the focus on the design sector by an increased number of landscape architecture lectures within the curriculum, to improve the internal communication between the administration staff and the lecturers and to realize the ambitious objectives concerning the internal quality assurance system.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Landscape Gardening and Design (state code – 653H9300) at Vilnius College higher education institution is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by fields of assessment.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	4
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	19

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

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

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

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

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Vertimas į lietuvių kalbą

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Atsižvelgiant į aukštą želdynų ir jų dizaino švietimo lygį ir ambicingus uždavinius, reikėtų didinti dizaino (kraštovaizdžio architektūros) paskaitų skaičių programoje. Reikėtų stiprinti orientaciją į dizaino sektorių ir žaliųjų miesto zonų priežiūrą bei dendrologiją. Taip pat siūlome didinti medžiagotyros paskaitų skaičių.
Kita vertus, užsiėmimų daigyne skaičius turėtų mažėti.
2. Visą etatą dirbančių dėstytojų skaičius turėtų būti didinamas.
3. Tarptautinį dėstytojų judumą reikėtų skatinti papildomomis priemonėmis.
4. Reikėtų palaipsniui gerinti nuolatinę administracijos darbuotojų ir dėstytojų bendravimą.
5. Reikėtų suintensyvinti pastangas siekiant įvesti paskaitas anglų kalba ne vėliau nei 2014 m.
6. Taip pat turi būti išplėtos virtualaus mokymosi galimybės.
7. Didesnį dėmesį reikėtų atkreipti į bendravimo įgūdžių ugdymą ir tobulinimą.
8. Reikėtų intensyviau remti studentų judumą (ERASMUS mainų programose ir pan.).
9. Ambicingi uždaviniai, susiję su vidinio kokybės užtikrinimo sistema, turėtų būti veiksmingai įgyvendinti.
10. Reikėtų tęsti sėkmingą projektą „Kraštovarkos studijų krypties praktinio mokymo ir mokslinių tyrimų infrastruktūros modernizavimas“ (VP3-2.2-ŠMM-14-V). Reikėtų kuo greičiau pašalinti sodo inžinerijos ir priežiūros praktikai naudojamų įrankių trūkumus.
11. „Istorinių sodų / parkų restauravimas“ galėtų tapti iššūkį keliančia, tačiau perspektyvia orientacija ateityje.

IV. SANTRAUKA

Vilniaus kolegijos Želdynų ir jų dizaino studijų programa teikia aukštos kokybės želdynų ir jų dizaino studijas.

Programos sandara atitinka ne tik darbo rinkos poreikius, bet taip pat atspindi tikėtinus šios profesinės srities pokyčius.

Darbuotojai yra aukštos kvalifikacijos ir geba motyvuoti studentus siekti rezultatų; tą patvirtina didelis geros kokybės baigiamųjų darbų skaičius.

Per pastaruosius metus buvo stipriai pagerinta materialioji bazė. Vilniaus kolegija siūlo palyginti labai geras studijų ir taikomųjų tyrimų sąlygas.

Vis dėlto svarbu pagerinti studijų programos tarptautiškumo aspektą, skatinti studentų ir dėstytojų judumą papildomomis priemonėmis, didinti visą etatą dirbančių dėstytojų skaičių, stiprinti orientaciją į dizaino sektorių įtraukiant į programą daugiau kraštovaizdžio architektūros paskaitų, gerinti vidinį bendravimą tarp administracijos darbuotojų ir dėstytojų ir įgyvendinti ambicingus uždavinius, susijusius su vidinio kokybės užtikrinimo sistema.